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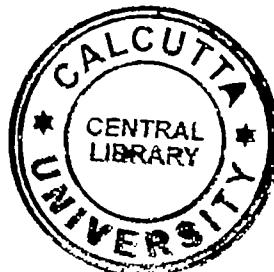
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# Mineral Resources and Patterns of Communications in Early Rajasthan\*

RANABIR CHAKRAVARTI

It is a matter of distinct privilege and honour for me to be so generously asked by the University of Calcutta to deliver the R.P. Nopany Memorial Lecture. I would like to offer my profuse thanks to the authorities of the University of Calcutta, especially the Estate and Trust officer and also to Dr. Suchandra Ghosh, the Head of the Department of AIHC. I feel deeply honoured. But I also stand before you with diffidence and tremor as I have no claim whatsoever to have worked on any aspect of the history and culture of Rajasthan. More so, because the session is being chaired by none other than Professor B. D. Chattopadhyaya, universally acclaimed for his mastery over the history of Rajasthan. I indeed feel dwarfed by his staggering scholarship in this particular region. I cannot but draw heavily upon his researches and path-breaking ideas; I have also taken recourse to the pioneering scholarship of many specialists in this field. The present essay offers little in original, either in terms of information or in analysis, and is built upon derived knowledge.

As I tread very cautiously and with utmost uncertainty from my more familiar Indian Ocean maritime zone to the uncharted area of Rajasthan, I might end up like the Pratihāra ruler who, being a complete mismatch to his very formidable Rāshtrakūṭa adversary, ran into the trackless desert (*durmārgam marumadhyam*). On the other hand, one may also ponder over the fact that the two utterly dissimilar entities, the Indian Ocean and the Thar desert, combine to produce the most sought after natural phenomenon in South Asia, the monsoon, which ironically eludes greater parts of Rajasthan (Fein and Stephen, 1987). While Rajasthan as an area has a very long history, human habitation here is not endowed with widespread and prosperous agrarian potentials and pursuits. Although some paddy and wheat cultivation is not unknown in Rajasthan, the scarcity of rainfall and acute aridity leave jowar and millet as crops of choice (Spate and Learmonth, 1967; Singh, 1971). The region is, however, noted for pastoral practices with well established circuits of mobile animal breeders and cattle keepers (Ratnagar, 2006). There is a distinct likelihood, as we shall try to demonstrate later, that the other itinerant group, the merchants, were often aware of and also utilized the patterns of movements of the pastoralists for their own journeys for exchange-related purposes. If pastoralism and mercantile movements favoured the elements of mobility in socio-economic life, the consolidation of sedentary life was to some extent provided by diverse types of craftsmen (Sharma, 1966). Rajasthan is noted for its rich deposits of copper, zinc and salt (Spate and Learmonth, 1967). The availability of

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\*Raghunath Prasad Nopany Memorial Lecture, 2010.

different minerals and metallurgical raw materials proved to be beneficial for craftsmen on a long-term basis. On the other hand, the possibility of procuring these vital ingredients to traditional crafts and industries paved the way for contacts and communications with neighbouring areas now located in Haryana, the Ganga-Yamuna doab, Malwa and Gujarat. Thus, the extremely dry climate of Rajasthan inhibits large-scale and sustained agrarian settlements; but the shrubs and bushes provide less obstacles to pastoralists who often move with their herds and pack animals. And the 'natural mineral resources attract craftsmen and merchants alike. The non-agrarian sector of the society and economy therefore hold crucial clues to the making of the past of Rajasthan<sup>1</sup>.

How pastoralism and animal breeding impacted upon human life in Rajasthan of very remote times looms large in the excavated site of Bagor (Bhilwara dt.). Excellent excavations, conducted by V.N. Mishra, demonstrate the life of the hunting-gathering community at Bagore depending largely upon the hunting of wild animals in the palaeolithic times. The onset of Mesolithic cultures for the first time saw the advent of pastoralism. Not only did tool types demonstrate a change from palaeolithic tools to microliths, but also visible was an appreciable reduction in the number of the bones of wild and hunted animals. One encounters in Mesolithic Bagor the growing number of bones of domesticated animals, although bones of wild animals did not altogether disappear. The result is what Mishra termed as the 'mixed economy' at mesolithic Bagor. The growing dependence on animal rearing resulted in the construction of semi-permanent huts and a possible cattle-pen located close to the huts. This is perhaps the earliest known instance of the gradual transition from the hunting-gathering stage to pastoralism in Rajasthan (Mishra, 1989).

Early traces of sedentarism in Rajasthan are seen not in the context of the beginning and foundation of crop-production—typical of Indian conditions—but in the shape of the emergence of metallurgy and metal crafts in the chalcolithic sites. The sites, distributed over two clusters at Ganeshawr-Jodhpura in north-eastern Rajasthan and Ahad-Gilund in south-eastern parts, show a concentration connected with the copper ore resources at Baleswar and Khetri areas. Archaeologically well attested data point to the working out of the copper mines of these areas in the context of chalcolithic cultures of Rajasthan. Located in the north-eastern part of Rajasthan, the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura cluster of chalcolithic sites, having as many as 80 sites, are well known for the metallurgical expertise of coppersmiths. These sites are strewn over the Shikar, Jaipur and Jhunjhunu districts, with a visible concentration of sites in the Shikar district (Thapar, 1989). Although metal technology appeared at Ganeshwar II around c. early third millennium BCE (c. 2800 BCE), the cluster of sites associated with the chalcolithic Ahar culture in south-eastern Rajasthan may suggest the antiquity of the metallurgical tradition there in the mid-fourth millennium BCE (Ratnagar, 2002; Allchin, 1982; Ghosh 1989). Not only Ganeshwar has yielded numerous copper implements and artefacts, but no less significant fact is the relatively small size of the

## Mineral Resources and Patterns of Communications in Early Rajasthan

settlement, ranging between 1.2-1.6 ha. leaving little room for doubt about its role as a major copper manufacturing centre. One may further infer that large scale manufacture of copper artefacts at Ganeshwar could have generated some demands for and the procurement of these metal implements at non-local centres. This possibility may gain further ground if one takes into account the chronological proximity of the copper-yielding Rajasthan sites with the early Harappan settlements and correspondence of the Ganeshwar II pottery with early Harappan pottery.

If one now turns one's attention to the Ahar culture in southeastern Rajasthan (in the Banas and Berach river system area), as many as 90 sites are known, the premier three among these being Ahar, Gilund and Balathal (Ghosh, 1989; Chakrabarti, 2008; Singh 2008). Both Ahar and Gilund are larger in size than Ganeshwar, measuring respectively 11 and 10.5 ha. These sites have yielded tools of production (like socketless axes, knife blade), weapons (barbed arrowheads) and non-utilitarian objects ( e.g. bangles, antimony rods and mirror), implying the diverse use of copper in Rajasthan in the third millennium BCE. The discovery of copper sheets and slags at Ahar I (2500-1900 BCE) clearly establishes that it was a copper smelting centre. The remains at Gilund offer an image of broad homogeneity with Ahar in terms of its material culture, especially in the field of metallurgy. However, Gilund presents the marker of its distinctiveness in the shape of a very impressive mud-brick complex (measuring 30.48x24.38 m), leaving an indication of its growing complexity as a settlement almost to an urban proportion. The third major site Balathal has a mud-brick fortification and a street along with an impressive variety of copper implements. But Balathal is also noted for its bones of domesticated animals, implying thereby that the inhabitants there combined pastoral pursuits with copper manufacturing. What is quite striking is the presence of copper axes at Kayatha in western Malwa where the indentation marks on these copper axes bear a close resemblance to the similar marks on axes found from Ganeshwar. The possibilities of connections between Jodhpura-Ganeshwar and Kayatha cultures are, therefore, in the offing.

Perhaps the most celebrated representative of the chalcolithic Rajasthan sites is Kalibangan in the Hanumangarh district on the river Ghaggar. Already in the early Harappan phase<sup>2</sup> (KLB I 2920-2550 BC), Kalibangan had assumed the size of 4 ha with a massive mud-brick fortification. If Kalibangan I is famous for the find of an excavated agricultural field with furrow marks even before the advent of mature Harappan urbanism, it is also noted for its diverse crafts production, including the customary output of copper implements (over 100 in number). Already in the early Harappan phase the Kalibangan pottery shows its affinity simultaneously with Kot Dijian type and with those from Kunal IB, Banawali and Rakhigarhi, the last three being situated in Haryana. There is, therefore, a distinct likelihood that it maintained and thrived on connections with both the Indus system and the region of Haryana. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the advent of Mature Harappan civilization

in Kalibangan II that witnessed the burgeoning of Kalibangan to an urban proportion and also the use of copper mirrors as grave goods. Archaeologists have highlighted the possibilities of the spread of Harappan culture in Rajasthan with a view to accessing the copper ore deposits in that area. Copper mirrors were likely to have been non-utilitarian products, manufactured not on mass scale but possibly meant for the use of the more affluent section of the society. The use of the copper mirrors as grave goods also points to the possible social differentiation and the emergence of a complex society, often accompanying the advent of urbanism(Ratnagar, 2002; Thapar, 1989)

In the aftermath of the Harappan Civilization (c. 2600-1750 BCE) emerged the copper hoard cultures in the upper Ganga valley and the Ganga-Yamuna doab regions, but surprisingly enough, similar hoards are conspicuous by their relative scarcity in Rajasthan itself. It is difficult to ascertain if the copper hoard cultures in the upper Ganga valley and the Doab were an extension of the copper technology in Rajasthan. If so, the region of Haryana and the Bharatpur-Bayana area in north-eastern Rajasthan could have played the role of conduits in the spread of copper technology from Rajasthan towards the Ganga valley and the Ganga-Yamuna doab for which the copper-rich Rajasthan is likely to have acted as a supply zone (Chakrabarti, 2006)<sup>3</sup>.

To what extent Rajasthan participated in the process of transition to early historical phase in north India around 600 BC is difficult to discern. The principal markers of the Early Historic phase in Indian history are the emergence of territorial polities (*mahājanapadas*, both monarchical and non-monarchical), the beginning and growth of the second urbanization and the rise of several protestant religious groups and movements, especially Buddhism and Jainism (Thapar, 2002). From the 600 BCE onwards the formations of the state society and the urban society went hand in hand, paving the way for the transition from lineage to state (Thapar, 1984; Allchin, 1995). This process was also intimately linked with the beginning of coinage and the advent of written documents. All these changes were of immense significance and signaled the transformation of the society from a relatively simpler to a complex phase (Chattopadhyaya, 2004). It is true that these remarkable changes were first and most visible in north India in general and the Ganga valley in particular. Similar changes in political and socio-economic life subsequently appeared in areas outside the Ganga valley, especially in the peninsular part from around the 2nd century BCE. The early historic period in Indian history is thus seen as a label for major changes in socio-economic, cultural and political transformation, but such changes were neither uniform and unilinear over the entire subcontinent. In fact the regional features of the transition to the early historic phase are now clearly recognized<sup>4</sup>.

To what extent Rajasthan or parts thereof shared the features typically associated with the early historic political and material milieu in the Ganga valley is difficult to ascertain. However, the area of Matsya, located in and around present Jaipur, figures in the list of the

*mahājanapadas* in the Buddhist texts and epics. It is, however, unlikely that surplus-yielding agriculture, a process commonly seen in the context of the emergence of the state society in the greater parts of the Ganga valley (Chakravarti, 2010), was also instrumental in the emergence of the Matsya *mahājanapada* as a territorial polity. On the other hand, the celebrated account (in the *Mahābhārata*) of the Kaurava adventure to snatch away the vast cattle wealth of King Virāṭ in the Matsya country could imply that the principal resource base of this *mahājanapada* lay in its perennial pastoral pursuits rather than the Ganga valley stereotype of agrarian surplus (Sharma, 1983). The account of the Kaurava cattle-raid may further speak of the accessibility of the Matsya area from the present Delhi-Haryana region where was situated the Kuru realm of the *Mahābhārata* fame.

It perhaps took another two hundred and fifty years when the definite penetration of the Ganga valley state society into north-eastern Rajasthan became visible. At Bairat the edict of Aśoka (c. 272- 233 BCE) not merely speaks of the incorporation of the former Matsya *mahājanapada* into the vast Maurya realm, but more importantly the edict explicitly and uniquely refers to Aśoka as *Māgadha rājā* or a Magadhan king. One has to recall here that Aśoka was clearly aware of the vastness of his realm (*mahalake hi vijitam*: RE XIV, Basak, 1959) which certainly included in it the erstwhile Matsya *mahājanapada*. Following Romila Thapar the metropolitan area of the far-flung Mauryan empire is to be located in Magadha, since in this area was situated the very nucleus of the Maurya empire that initiated conquests and annexation of vanquished territories. The area around Bairat, representing the former Matsya *mahājanapada*, therefore assumes the position of periphery vis-à-vis the metropolitan state of Magadha (Thapar, 1987). One can only assume that the occupation of north-eastern Rajasthan could have provided a foothold for further communications with the Kathiawad peninsula which also is known for the engraving of Aśokan edicts at Girnar. The area around Bairat could to have been reached either from the Delhi region (Bahapur in Delhi has yielded a Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka; Sircar, 1979; Singh, 2008) or from Meerut in the doab area which is the site of Aśoka's Pillar Edicts. Eastern Rajasthan thus was connected with both Ganga-Yamuna doab and the Kathiawad peninsula during the Mauryan times.

What however is beyond any doubt, thanks to the recent researches by Craddock, Hegde and Arun K. Biswas, is the working out of the mines at Rajpur Dariba, Rampur Agucha and Zawar Mala during the period from mid fifth century BCE to late second century BCE, if not slightly later times also (Biswas, 1998). Rajpur Dariba east lode has yielded samples datable to 375 BCE, 360 BCE, 250 BCE, 120 BCE and 150 CE. At Zawar Mala the earliest working out of the mines has been assigned to around 450 BCE, while the mining at Zawar Mala continued till 200 BCE. These mines, especially Zawar Mala, has yielded incontrovertible archaeological proof of the extraction of zinc from the selective mining of the lead-silver-zinc ore in the Zawar Mala area. This first of all required the mastery of

smelting as the reduction of zinc oxide needs the temperature around 1000 degree centigrade and a temperature below c. 950 degree centigrade is not suitable for the production of zinc. The mastery of this metallurgy by the miners and craftsmen in Rajasthan needs to be given its due recognition and weightage in the history of early Indian technology and metallurgy. The importance of zinc production is further underlined when one takes into account the fact that zinc alloyed with copper results in the production of brass (*arakuṭa*), *pittala*, the poor man's gold. The Zawar Mala and other two mining areas are considered to have yielded the earliest known output of zinc in the subcontinent. What is remarkable here is the availability of the earliest known brass artefact, a vase, from the Bhir mound in Taxila which was surely under the Maurya rule (Biswas, 1998; Allchin, 1995; Thapar, 1996). The manufacturing of the brass vase certainly points to the manufacturing of zinc which, in its turn, began to be extracted from the mines in Rajasthan during the Mauryan times, if not during the pre-Mauryan period. One can convincingly argue that the Mauryas of Magadha were considerably interested in the Zawar Mala mines of Rajasthan which was under Mauryan occupation. One cannot also lose sight of the possibility that the zinc manufactured in Rajasthan could well have reached the Taxila, a Mauryan politico-administrative centre in the north-west which had overland linkages with Rajasthan. There are well known instances of the Mauryan interests in providing networks of overland communications within their realm<sup>5</sup>. The engine of change once again is to be located to the mineral resources of Rajsathan and not in the agrarian potential there.

At this juncture it may be relevant to study the importance of mineral resources in the making of a powerful monarchical polity, as laid down in the celebrated theoretical treatise, the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya. The popular and general tradition is that the text belonged to the Mauryan times. The dating and authorship of the *Arthaśāstra* are both matters of considerable scholarly debates. The current historiography of the *Arthaśāstra* suggests that the text took its present shape not earlier than the first or second centuries CE, though the earliest stratum of the text may go back to c. third century BCE (Trautmann, 1971). Significantly enough, the third century BCE marks the height of the Mauryan power in the subcontinent. The earliest layer of the *Arthaśāstra*, datable perhaps to the Mauryan times, contains the significant section concerning the functions of the heads of important administrative departments (*adhyakshaprachāra*: Book II of the text, Kangle, 1966). A salient feature of the *Arthaśāstra* in general and the *Adhyakshaprachāra* section in particular is the strong thrust on material/economic/financial matters for an efficient running of the state (Ghoshal, 1966; Sen, 1969; Chakravarti, 1986). The *Arthaśāstra* is the earliest known theoretical treatise which clearly underlined the importance of mines and mineral resources (*ākara*; *Arthaśāstra*, II.12). The *Arthaśāstra* unequivocally pronounces that mines and mineral resources generate wealth for the treasury (*ākaraprabhavaḥ kośah*). A sound treasury, in its turn, is essential for the raising of a strong army (*kośāddanḍa prajāyate*);

and with the dual command over treasury and army the entire earth is obtainable (*kośadandanābhyaīm prāpyate prithivī*). This is a striking statement firstly because of the Kautilyan formulation of the interlocking of the army and treasury for ensuring a ruler's political mastery. Also notable is the point that in the *Arthaśāstra* both treasury (*kośa*) and army (*danda*) are enlisted in the seven constituent elements (*saptaprakritayah*) of a state. No less significant is the concept that the root of both treasury and army lies in the control over mines, because the mines yield resources vital for the maintenance of both. The *Kautilya Arthaśāstra* is also the earliest known text that advocated for the inclusion of mines (*khani*) in the list of seven heads of revenue to be supervised by the chief collector of taxes (*saṃdharttā*) in a kingdom. A mine, according to the *Arthaśāstra*, is capable of generating twelve kinds of income.

In view of the clear recognition of the resource-yielding potential of a mine by the *Arthaśāstra*, the text strongly recommends that all mines should belong to the king who, theoretically at least, was entitled to monopoly rights over mines and mineral resources. Apart from the *Arthaśāstra*, other normative treatises like the *Manusāṃhitā*, the *Sāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Kāmaṇḍakīya Nītiśāra* also uphold the concept of the royal monopoly over all mines and mineral resources. The *Arthaśāstra*, however, presents the most systematic discussion on the methods of exploitation of mineral resources. With this end in view, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends the appointment of a high-ranking functionary, the Director of Mines (*ākarādhyaksha*) who should ideally be an expert metallurgist. The *Ākarādhyaksha* should supervise all the relevant processes of mining: the actual working out of a mine; sending the extracted mineral resources to suitable manufactories (*karmāntas*) which are under royal control; and finally the sale of these manufactured commodities through a single channel (*ekamukham*) under state supervision. The economic interests of a ruler in mines and mineral resources will be evident from the following Kautilyan proposal. Assessing the advantages arising out of the royal possession of mineral resources, Kautilya recommends that the ruler should aim at working out only those mines which involve light expenditure to operate, while those requiring heavy expenditure to work out should be given to (actually leased out) non-governmental enterprises against the payment of shares and other dues, something analogous to a licensing fee (*vyayakriyābhārikamākaram bhāgena prakrayena vā dadyat, lāghavikarāt ātmanā cha kārayet*). Kautilya thus seems to have somewhat modified his theoretical stance of upholding complete royal monopoly over mines for the consideration of economization which, to Kautilya, was a major factor in any administrative initiative. The theoretician would also prefer the conquest of a mine yielding base metals to one with precious mineral resources. He argues that the products arising out of the mines of base metal, though not expensive, had a widespread demand, while precious mineral objects would have a relatively fewer number of clientele although fetching enormous prices and profits. This perspective gains

some significance in the inclusion of salt-making in the list of mining activities. Salt production, like other mining activities, is ideally to be under state monopoly (that is why the appointment of a the Director of Salt Production or the *Lavaṇādhyaksha*), but could be leased out to individual and non-governmental enterprises. The rather lengthy discussion on the Kautilyan ideas of mines and mineral resources need not imply that the Mauryas translated these into practice, but there are indications of the Maurya interests and involvement in mines and mineral resources within their vast realm, including Rajasthan.

In this context one may take into account the fact that Rajasthan was noted for the availability of salt from the region around the Lake Sambhar. Salt manufacturing and trade in salt were surely instrumental in the emergence of the Lunias as salt dealers in the subsequent history of Rajasthan. It is significant to note that in an early second century inscription (of the time of Kushāṇa ruler Huvishka) from Mathura, several items, including salt, were donated to a shrine (Sircar, 1965: 51–53; Mukherjee, 1981). A logical surmise would be that this salt is likely to have reached Mathura from the salt manufacturing area near the Lake Sambhar in Rajasthan which is the nearest source of the salt to reach Mathura. That manufacture and trade in salt generated considerable wealth and resources is well known<sup>6</sup>.

The incorporation of parts of Rajasthan in the Mauryan realm notwithstanding, soon after the collapse of the Maurya rule in early second century BCE, there emerged a *janapada* of the Śibis at Mādhyamikā (Chitore: *Majhimakaya Śibijanapadasa*), which issued coins and seals. The Śibi *janapada* was a non-monarchical polity, closely resembling the similar non-monarchical polity of the Mālava *gana*. The latter's presence in Rajasthan is best evident from the seals and coin moulds (from Tonk) that clearly described the Mālavas as a *gana*. The other *gana-saṅgha* (non-monarchical group) was that of the Yaudhyes. All these non-monarchical groups had earlier been associated with the Punjab. This is plainly visible in the accounts of the martial skills of the Mallois (the Mālavas) and the Siboi (the Śibis) against the Macedonian army in the late fourth century BCE. There is little doubt that some of these non-monarchical groups migrated from the Punjab to Rajasthan, though it is difficult to ascertain when exactly they shifted from their earlier territories. The most notable among these groups in terms of their martial skills were the Yaudheyas who were specifically portrayed as a group whose livelihood came from their warlike activities (*āyudhajīvi saṅgha*). In fact the presence of the professional bodies of warriors in the Punjab area figures in both Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and the *Arthaśāstra*, implying thereby the existence of such warrior groups in the Punjab in the pre-Mauryan and the Mauryan times.

It is not unlikely that the non-monarchical groups dispersed from the Punjab into Rajasthan at a time when the mighty Mauryan dynasty reached its height of power and gained a distinct visibility in the post-Mauryan period (c. 200 BCE–300 CE; Dasgupta, 1976). Was their preference for Rajasthan as the new habitat shaped by the prospect of controlling vital mineral resources from the Rajasthan mines? Metal yielding mines (like copper) could prove

advantageous for armour manufacturing, particularly for the groups noted for their martial skills. The presence of the Śibis and the Mālavas in the eastern part of Rajasthan further points to the linkages between the Punjab and eastern Rajasthan. The pre-eminent *gaṇasāṅghas* like the Mālavas, the Yaudheyas, the Arjunāyanas, the Kuṇindas etc are well known for their minting of copper coins( Dasgupta, 1976). First, this suggests that their presence in Rajasthan could have helped them access the copper deposits in Rajasthan. The very large number of coins and coin moulds, associated with these non-monarchical groups, cannot but also highlight the importance of Rajasthan in the commercial network of western India with the Ganga-Yamuna doab and also possibly Gujarat. The crucial area in this context could have been the Bharatpur-Bayana region in Rajasthan which may have provided an effective corridor of communication with the adjacent Agra-Mathura zone in the Ganga-Yamuna doab. The expedition by the Śaka ruler Nahapāna (first century CE), who had his principal stronghold in the region around Govardhana (Nashik, Maharashtra), against the Mālavas may further speak of the penetration of a Deccanese ruler into Rajasthan. The accessibility into Rajasthan from western Deccan is also clearly evident from the conquest of Maru (desert area of Rajasthan) and the ouster of the Yaudheyas by the powerful Śaka kshatrapa Rudradāman I (mid-second century CE: Chakravarti, 2010). The Mālavas figure in the Allahabad Pillar inscription as one of the non-monarchical political entities.

The Mālavas had held their ground as ‘autonomous spaces’ (Chattopadhyaya, 2003) even during the heydays of the far-flung Kushāṇa realm; till the time of the Gupta ruler Samudragupta (c. 335-75 CE) the Mālavas maintained their existence as a non-monarchical group paying tributes to the powerful Gupta monarch, Samudragupta. It is significant to note that the expansion of the Gupta power in fact signaled the demise of these autonomous spaces. One effect of this was the gradual shifting of the Mālavas from Rajasthan to western Malwa and ancient Daśapura (modern Mandasore in the north-western most part of Madhya Pradesh). Daśapura seems to have been situated in a blend-zone between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh areas. As Daśapura figures in the list of *tīrthas* where, according to the Nasik inscription, Nahapāna or his son-in-law undertook tours of pilgrimage, it strongly suggests the existence of a network of communications between western Deccan and the north-eastern fringes of present Rajasthan. Daśapura’s prominence in epigraphic literature and other literary texts, especially under the Aulikaras, may strongly suggest the emergence of this urban centre in close proximity to north-eastern Rajasthan which found a convenient node in Daśapura from c. 4th-5th century onwards (Saloman, 1989). Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the emergence of Daśapura as a major urban centre comes from the famous Mandasore inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman. The main purport of this record is the construction and repair of a sun-temple at Daśapura in 436 and 473 CE. The more significant point is the migration of a famous body of silk-weavers from Lāṭa (southern Gujarat) to Daśapura where they built the sun-temple (Basham, 1978). The

journey from Lāṭa to Daśapura clearly highlights the overland linkages between southern Gujarat and Rajasthan. This gains further ground in another inscription from Sanjeli in Gujarat. Dated in c. 503 CE this record of the Hūṇa ruler Toramāna (Thakker and Mehta, 1978; Ramesh, 1981) informs us of a commercial centre in Gujarat, named Vadrapālī where converged both local (*vāstavya*) and non-local (*vaidēṣya*) merchants. Among non-local merchants figures a trader from Daśapura, once again underlining the emergence of Daśapura in the overland communications between north-eastern Rajasthan and Gujarat. In the existing historiography of early Indian trade one is familiar with the account of the overland connection between Mathura and Ujjaiyini in western Malwa which in its turn maintained regular contacts with the rich ports of Gujarat (Chakravarti, 2008). In the light of our above discussion one may also argue for the importance of the route connecting Mathura with northern and north-eastern Rajasthan through the Bharatpur-Bayana areas and/or the region around Daśapura for reaching Gujarat. The relevant point here is the distinct likelihood of Rajasthan offering conduits of communications for reaching the Punjab, the Ganga-Yamuna doab and the Gujarat coast. One may further ponder to what extent the emergence of territorial states in Rajasthan—first mostly non-monarchical polities and then, monarchical states—derived from the resource-bases of the non-agrarian sector of the economy (mining, artisanal and commercial activities).

The period from 650-1300CE, usually labeled as early medieval, is particularly noted in Indian history for bringing in distinct regional features in polity, society, economy and culture. That Rajasthan shared in its own way in this pan-Indian process is brought home by the wonderful researches of Chattopadhyaya. Like many other regions in the sub-continent Rajasthan also experienced the expansion of agriculture, improvements in local-level irrigation system that became important landmarks in rural landscape, emergence of various categories of market places and exchange centres and finally the formation of local and supra-local polities. This took the shape of what Chattoapadhyaya labeled as the formation of the Rajput polities (Chattopadhyaya, 1994). This is undoubtedly a very major phase of transition in the history of Rajasthan. Agrarian development and improved irrigation technologies, visible in the inscriptions from Rajasthan of the early middle ages, did contribute to the growing resource base of many new local and regional polities. But the formation of state societies in Rajasthan was not merely generated by agrarian expansion since the region concerned did not possess the same scale of the fertility of soil as seen in the case of the Ganga basin and the Ganga delta. The possibility of the contribution from the non-agrarian sector, especially from the traditional mineral resources, looms large to the making of the material milieu of the polities in early medieval Rajasthan. The process is best understood by Chattopadhyaya's formulation of the 'change through continuity' which appreciates the importance of the additive changes and the changes from within a given socio-cultural situation. A few instances may not be irrelevant to illustrate the process.

In 646 CE an inscription of the Guhila ruler Śilāditya records the migration of a community of *mahājanas* from the settled area of Vaṭanagara (Vasantagṛh, Sirohi dt.) under the leadership of one Jentaka (*pramukha*) to a place Aranyakūpagiri. At Aranyakūpagiri was recently discovered, as the inscription narrates, a mine (*āgara*) that paved new avenues of occupation to the people. The migrant community to Aranyakūpagiri also arranged for the worship of goddess Aranyakavāsinī in a temple. First, the inscription tells us about a new settlement which comes into existence not by the typical agrarian expansion through the revenue-free grant of land to a brāhmaṇa and/or a religious institution, but by working out a new mine. Second, the inscription further records the migration of a community from the already settled Vaṭanagara to another area the name of which carries its association with a forest (*aranya*) and hills (*giri*). It is likely that the working out of the mine resulted in the transformation of the forest tract in a mountainous zone into a resource-yielding sedentary settlement.

Chattpadhyay's insightful analysis of Rajasthan inscriptions dating from 644 CE to 1296 CE unravels before us the contributions of trade to the socio-economic changes in early medieval Rajasthan (Chattpadhyaya, 1994: especially the chapter on 'Markets and Merchants in Early Medieval Rajasthan'). Masterly handling these epigraphic data, he demonstrates the presence of at least 29 market centres in dispersed areas of Rajasthan. The image of burgeoning commerce, especially from tenth century onwards, is unmistakable in Rajasthan. Nearly thirty percent of such trade centres were *maṇḍapikās*, variously called *śulkamaṇḍapikās* or *pattanamaṇḍapikās*. The *maṇḍapikā* literally stands for a covered pavilion; *śulkamaṇḍapikā* denotes a *maṇḍapikā* which yielded tolls and customs (*śulka*). As tolls and customs cannot but be associated with trade and commerce, the emergence of *śulka maṇḍapikā* certainly speaks of centres of commercial transactions. The prefix *pattana* attached to the word *maṇḍapikā* implies the location of a *maṇḍapikā* within an urban space, and/or the *maṇḍapikā* itself assuming an urban proportion. Whatever interpretation one prefers, the term *pattanamaṇḍapikā* has clear associations with both commerce and urban society. Distinct from the *maṇḍapikā* in epigraphic sources were the *haṭṭas* or *haṭṭikās* which resembled present rural-level exchange centres (*hāṭ*). Available epigraphic data on the collection of *śulka* or tolls and customs at *maṇḍapikā* suggest that these were regularly, if not daily, collected. Exchanges at the *maṇḍapikā* were thus routine everyday activities and not periodic. The *haṭṭa/haṭṭikā*, on the other hand, was marked by its periodicity, usually coming to life on a stipulated day(s) of the week. We have tried to argue it elsewhere that the *maṇḍapikā* served as a middle tier exchange centre located between the rural-level periodic or weekly market places (*haṭṭa*) and larger markets at urban centres (Chakravarti, 2007). The classic instance of the emergence of a *maṇḍapikā* in Rajasthan is offered by Nāḍḍula, thanks once again to the masterly studies by Chattpadhyaya. Inscriptions of the eleventh century suggest that Nāḍḍula first gained historical visibility as a village among

twelve villages (*dvādaśagrāmīya Naddulagrāma*); it is likely that Naddula assumed the position of equidistance among these villages. Then it turned into a *mandapikā* and emerged as a nodal point in the locality level exchange network; subsequently Naddula became an urban centre and finally flourished as the apex political centre of the Chāhamānas of Nadole (Chattopadhyaya, 1994). The transformation of a major market centre into a well known political centre is a clear pointer to the significance of the non-agrarian sector in the making of a local power of early medieval Rajasthan, which in spite of agrarian developments, did not command as rich an agrarian resource base as one encounters, for example, in the Ganga valley.

Two inscriptions from Shergarh area, dated in the ninth century, acquaint us with two more *mandapikās* at Śrīpatha and Vusāvata. If agrarian surplus paved the way for the emergence of a *mandapikā* at Naddula, *mandapikās* at Śrīpatha and Vusāvata witnessed the transactions in horses and elephants. Both elephants and horses were expensive animals, used for warfare and in the service of politico-military and social elites. Significantly enough, neither the horse nor the elephant was locally available in north-eastern Rajasthan where these animals seem to have reached from elsewhere. One known centre of horse-trade (*ghoṭaka-yātrā*: literally a horse fair) stood at Prithūdaka or Pehoa in the Karnal district of Haryana, as is evident from an eighth century record. In view of the long history of the overland linkages of Rajasthan with the Ganga-Yamuna doab region, the supply of horses could have come to the *mandapikās* at Śrīpatha and Vusāvata from the Prithūdaka area (Chakravarti, 2009a).

Among the early medieval trade centres in Rajasthan was Śrīmāla, identified with modern Bhinmal. The prominence of Śrīmāla as an exchange centre is associated with the growing prominence of the Srimali merchant community which gradually assumed the features of a distinct sub-caste within the vaiśya and/or baniya community (Chattoapdhyaya, 1994). The mobility of the merchants of Śrīmāla figures in an early tenth century inscription from northern Konkan, which was at that time under the rule of the Rāshtrakūṭa king Krishna II. The said inscription informs us of the famous port of Samyāna (Sandan/Sinjan of contemporary Arabic and Persian travel accounts and texts on geography), corresponding to modern Sanjan in northern Maharashtra (about 230 kms to the north of present Mumbai). At this port town, according to the record, stood a Vaishnava temple wherein was enshrined Bhillamāladeva Madhusūdana. The record leaves little room for doubt that the temple received patronage from the merchants of Bhillamāla (Sircar, 1955: 59; Chakravarti, 2001). It is, therefore, logical to assume that some merchants from Bhillamāla migrated to and settled down in the north Konkan port-town of Sanjan in or before the early tenth century CE. This commercial contact was likely to have been along overland routes that passed through southern Gujarat (Lāṭa area). One may further infer that the inland merchants from Bhillamāla could have been attracted by the prospect of maritime commerce at Samyāna.

We would like to conclude this essay by once again looking at trade in salt for which the Sambhar lake in Rajasthan was duly famous. Several inscriptions of the early ninth century from Sākambhari area in Rajasthan inform us of the donations given by salt-dealers (Jha, 2008). It is reasonable to assume that these salt dealers were considerably successful in their profession which allowed them to part with some portion of their wealth for religious patronage. The affluence of a salt dealer is best seen in several inscriptions from the mid-ninth century referring to the urban centre of Siyāduni, modern Siyadoni in the Bulandshahr region of Uttar Pradesh. Nāgaka, the salt dealer (*nemakavanij*) in question, was the son of Chanduka who too was a salt merchant, clearly highlighting the hereditariness in this profitable pursuit. As a hereditary salt merchant Nāgaka made several donations to temples located in the urban centre at Siyāduni where also stood a *mandapikā* (Chattopadhyaya, 1994). We would like to argue and infer that the salt could have reached the *mandapikā* at Siyadoni from the known source of Sambhar lake in Rajasthan. Though there is no direct evidence of this in the Siyadoni inscription, the sustained linkages between Rajasthan and the Ganga-Yamuna doab (possibly through the Bharatpur-Bayana corridor) may give some credence to our inference. Salt-manufacturing, usually viewed as a mining operation in early India, seems to have added to the non-agrarian sector of the economy of Rajasthan, particularly in the early medieval times.

### Notes

- 1 Traditionally the R.P. Nopany lecture is associated with the discussions on the 'glories' of Rajasthan. This essay does not attempt to harp on this theme, but tries to understand the changing features of the society, economy and polity of Rajasthan mostly during the first millennium CE.
- 2 In the understanding of the Harappan civilization recent scholarship prefers three chronological prefixes, early, mature and late to the previous phases like pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan. The process of urbanization and urban decline in this civilization is seen as a long-drawn experience in the north-western part of the subcontinent, and not merely as a result of the impact of external stimuli paving the way for urban growth (Mughal; Kenoyer, 2002)
- 3 Dilip Chakrabarti has pointed to a similar role played by the Chhotanagpur plateau in relation to the crafts and artisanal activities and urbanization in the western part of the Bengal delta (ancient Rādhā region) during the early historical period (Chakrabarti, 1989)
- 4 B.D. Chattopadhyaya has, therefore, rightly argued that the Ganga valley was the epicenter of early historic urbanization and state formation processes. These processes then percolated and spread out to regions peripheral to the Ganga valley. This resulted in the emergence of the secondary states and secondary urban centres in areas beyond the Ganga valley, like the Deccan, Kalinga and parts of Bengal (Chattoapdhyaya, 2004, especially his essay on 'Urbanization in Early Bengal' in this book).

- 5 That the Mauryas were interested in the mineral resources in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is best evident from the apparent concentration of Aśokan edicts in this region and from the appointment of a Maurya viceroy (*āryaputra*) at Suvarnagiri (literally the hill of gold, identified with Jonahgiri in Kurnool area, Andhra Pradesh, by Sircar (Sircar, 1965). Allchin (1962) presented archaeological proofs of the gold-digging in this area during the Mauryan times, if not even during the pre-Mauryan times. The long Mauryan occupation of this area, however, did not lead to any major changes in its politico-economic milieu, as the Mauryas did not attempt any administrative and economic restructuring of this region. In other words, the mineral resources were likely to have been extracted in order to improve upon the material condition of the metropolitan Magadhan area to which the peninsular zone stood as a peripheral area (Thapar, 1987)
- 6 In the late first century CE Pliny in his *Naturalis Historia* (Rackham, 1942) showed his awareness of the querying of rock salt from Mount Oromenus (identified with the Salt Range in Pakistan). Pliny further stated that the revenue from the querying of rock-salt exceeded the levies from a diamond mine. From the contiguous north-western borderland comes a donative inscription recording the gift made by a *lonagahapati*. The term stands for a rich person whose wealth was derived from salt (*lonā=lavāna* or salt). In other words, he was a salt merchant (Mukherjee, 1997; Chakravarti, 2009b)

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# **Terracottas from the Early Village Farming Settlements of Eastern India**

**SWATI RAY AND SHUBHA MAJUMDER**

The touch and feel of the earth have significantly moulded the basic instincts of mankind since its genesis. The good earth has prompted the spontaneous creative urges for generations. This paper focuses on the terracotta objects, i.e., baked clay objects other than pottery found from the early village farming (hence forth EVF) phases of the excavated sites of eastern India. The study area comprises the region bounded by the present states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa. This paper is based on the framework of EVF settlements in eastern India as observed in a recent work (Chattopadhyay 2012).

Regarding the definition and implications of the expression ‘early village farming settlements’, it has been observed that “The formative phase of development of EVF settlements in Eastern India is generally characterized by the use of BRW.... These phases essentially represent an agro-pastoral based economy and the continuity of earlier non-farming associated intensive foraging survival strategy within a chronological framework i.e. 1. pre-metallic, 2a. metallic (use of copper and the initial phase of the use of iron) and 2b. mature phase of the use of iron. Chronologically, the period ranges from the middle of the second millennium to the latter half of the first millennium BC.” (Chattopadhyay 2010: 97-124, 2012) The early village farming phases are also collectively nomenclatured as ‘Chalcolithic’, ‘Protohistoric’, ‘Ferro-Chalcolithic’, ‘Early Farming’ and even ‘Osteo-Chalcolithic’. The entire EVF phase based on a mixed economy in which both agro-pastoral/farming and non-farming activities played significant roles to shape its cultural matrix, can therefore be visualized in the context of three stages of developments—firstly, the initial pre-metallic stage, secondly, the beginning of the metal using phase (both copper and iron), and finally, the mature metal using phase (dominated by iron and the obvious continuation of copper and its alloys).

It is well known that there is a vast historiography devoted to the study of terracotta art forms in eastern Indian especially from the early historic period onwards. The search for the Maurya and Sunga idiom was quite popular among the art historian. However, our perception of such idioms of art are deeply rooted in its formative phase obviously discernible in the terracotta forms found from the BRW associated early village farming phases. The objective of the present paper is to gather together the entire repertoire of terracotta forms found from the EVF phases of eastern India.

## **Excavated Sites of Bihar**

The excavated sites in the north Bihar plain include Chirand, Chechar-Kutubpur, Maner,

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Manjhi and Panr and Champa and Oriup in the south Bihar alluvial plains. The excavated EVF sites of Senuwar, Taradih, Sonpur, Juafardih and Ghorakatora are in the south Bihar plateau region along the edges of the Kaimur range.

**Chirand** ( $25^{\circ}45'N/ 84^{\circ}50'E$ ), a classic EVF site, is situated on the lofty river bank near the confluence of the Ganga and the Sarayu rivers in the Saran district. A series of excavations (IAR 1962-63: 6, 1963-64: 6-8, 1964-65: 6-7, 1968-69: 5-6, 1969-70: 3-4, 1970-71: 6-7, 1971-72: 6-7, 1972-73: 7-8, 1980-81: 9-10) confirm its survival from the 'Neolithic'/ Neo-Chalcolithic to the historical periods. The evolution of the cultural stages of the EVF phases has been well portrayed here. Period I (sub-divided into IA and IB) representing the Neolithic phase or the antecedent stage of the EVF phases, yielded (i) bone and antler objects like hammers, needles, points, borers, pins, styluses; tanged and socketed arrow-heads; pendants, personal ornaments like bangles (prepared out of tortoise shell), reel-shaped objects, discs, a broken comb and ivory remains, (ii) microliths, including parallel-sided blades, scrapers, tanged arrow-heads, points, lunates and borers, (iii) ground/polished stone objects such as celts, pestles, balls, querns, hammers, broken shaft straightner etc., (iv) beads of chalcedony, agate, jasper, steatite, and faience, including a few unfinished ones indicating a local industry, (v) terracotta figurines like humped bulls, birds, *naga* and (vi) other terracotta objects like bangles, marbles, perforated discs, perhaps used as spindle whorls, toy-cart wheels, pendants with incised and punctured decoration etc. The ceramics include a bewildering range of red ware, grey, black wares and BRW, all handmade. Both burnished and unburnished specimens were present in the above wares. More, interesting, however, was the occurrence of mat-impression on a sherd, indicating the knowledge, during the period, of the technique of preparing mats out of reeds. Paddy-husk impressions on some of the pieces of burnt clay as also some grains of charred rice indicate the use of that cereal by the inhabitants. An interesting feature of the settlement was the existence of a 75-cm thick mud-wall around the dwellings. The discovery of charred and semi-charred bones of various animals, birds, fish, *mollusca* and carbonized grains and seeds of wild fruits is noteworthy. The occurrence of a fragmentary copper bangle is noticeable. The life span of this EVF phase ranges from 2500-2300 BC as attested by C<sup>14</sup> dates.

The remains from Period II (subdivided into Period IIA-1600-1000 BC and Period IIB-1000-800 BC) represent an advanced Chalcolithic culture (Verma, 2007: 6-7). The pottery types consisted of BRW, black, grey and red wares. Other finds include polished stone tools, microliths (both finished and unfinished tools), bone tools (arrowheads, pins, styluses), terracotta beads with obliquely incised decorations, semiprecious stone beads, other terracotta objects and a few fragments of copper and copper bangles and a large number of animal bones. In spite of having similar cultural assemblages of Period IIA, Period IIB (1000-800 B.C.) is distinguished by the evidence of the use of iron implements on the top layer of this phase.

The above database suggests that Chirand was a self-sufficient settlement so far as the early village farming economy is concerned.

### Terracottas

Period IA yielded a terracotta cake of irregular shape (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 4). Period IA also yielded a terracotta broken piece of irregular shape and size with signs of perforations (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 5) and a terracotta irregular shaped ball (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 6). A terracotta miniature stupa like object having punctured decoration on its entire outer surface was also found (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 6). Period IA yielded several animal figurines in terracotta. Among these, is a handmade humped bull (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVII 1), and a tail part of a bird figurine (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVII 9). A crude handmade terracotta female figurine was also found from Period IA (Pl. A). Its body is like a pipe. It (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVII 10) has a circular head with a depression on the top. Breasts are depicted quite prominently and the other limbs of the figure are not depicted. A terracotta ill-burnt lump of clay (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 1) and terracotta cakes of irregular shapes and sizes (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 2, 3) have been found from Period IB. A daub impressed burnt clay piece (Verma, 2007, Plate—LXII A+B A) was also found from Period IB. Period IB also yielded terracotta bi-cone beads (Verma, 2007, Plate—LA. 1, 1-11). A terracotta stem (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 7) and a terracotta handle with a broken piece of antler embedded in it (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 8) were reported from Period IB. Another interesting terracotta wheel like object was reported from this phase. One side of this object (Verma, 2007, Plate —LV 9) is flat and the other side is convex. There is a hole in the centre. A convex sided terracotta circular object (Verma, 2007, Plate—LV 10) with flattened edges was also found from this level. It has been identified by the excavator as a dabber. So far as ornaments are concerned, a terracotta bangle having a triangular section (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 1) and some broken pieces of bangles having thumb pressed pointed triangular shaped decorations (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 2, 3) were unearthed from Period IB. Other terracotta objects from Period IB include 1. a pyramidal shaped small object (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 4) having punctured decoration on its outer surface. There is a vertical perforation on it and its base is flat, 2. a terracotta circular locket (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 5), hollow inside and with punctured decorations on its outer surface. There is a hole on its fringe for suspension, 3. fragment of a terracotta animal (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 7), 4. a terracotta locket having incised and punctured decorations. It is of rectangular shape having its frontage slightly concave. On its back side there is a lump of clay attached and in it there is a horizontal hole provided for suspension (Verma, 2007, Plate—LVI 8), 5. another rectangular shaped locket having punctured and incised decoration. There is double horizontal perforation in it for suspension (Verma, 2007, Plat LVI 9), 6. a crude handmade wheel having a central hole and with punctured decoration on both its sides (Verma, 2007, Plate LVI 10), 7. Two specimens bearing punctured decorations within

triangles of incised lines (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVI 11, 12), 8. fragment of a headless bull whose body is vertically half damaged and its legs are shown by arches separating them (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 2), 9. a headless dog and its legs like the earlier bull are shown by arches separating them (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 3), 10. a disjointed pipe of a vessel (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 4), 11. flat tail portion of a terracotta bird (Plate-LVII 5), 12. head of a bird with broken beak and eyes depicted by holes (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 6), 13. two coiled snakes (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 7, 11), 14. possibly a symbolic representation of *naga* (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 8), 15. and a headless bird figurine with traces of punctured decoration on its body (Verma, 2007, Plate-LVII 12). Period II yielded terracotta beads having incised decoration on the obverse side (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIIIA-B 1. 1-12A.) and the reverse side (Verma, 2007, Plate LIIIA-B 2. 1-12 B) is also decorated. Period IIA yielded an ill-fired terracotta ball of dull black colour (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 9) and a terracotta handmade object having a circular top with punctured decoration attached with a rounded slightly long handle. (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 1). This same Period had also yielded a crude handmade terracotta bird (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 2) having a flat tail and pointed head with a vertical perforation for inserting a thread to pull it. Again there is a horizontal perforation in the tail probably for attaching an axle and wheel. Similar to the above specimen is a lump of burnt clay representing a bird (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 11). A handmade miniature figure of a headless terracotta dog (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 7) had also been reported from Period IIA. An interesting potsherd of BRW having post-firing scratch design representing a symbol of the sun God (Verma, 2007, Plate-LXII A+B B2) was also reported from Period IIA (Pl. B). Another terracotta miniature dish with perforations on its edge from this Period has been identified by the excavator as resembling the pan of a balance (Verma, 2007, Plate-LXII A+B B3). Some terracotta beads have also been reported (Plate-LXII A+B B4-6). Earlier excavations yielded a handmade hump bull from Period I (IAR 1972-73 Plate XI) (Pl. C).

Period IIB yielded some interesting terracotta objects. A terracotta bird, head and tail broken, having punctured decoration all over its upper surface (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 3) had been unearthed. The other side is plain. A terracotta reel shaped object having incised and punctured decoration on both the sides (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 4) had also been found. A female figurine identified by the excavator as an archaic representation of a Mother Goddess (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 5) had also been found. The pointed head was executed by thumb impressed method. Its body is concave with a heavy waist. Initial attempts of accentuating body parts are perhaps encountered. Another handmade female figurine identified by the excavator as a Mother goddess (Verma, 2007, Plate-LIV 6) had been reported. Both her outstretched hands and head have incised decorations. The upper portion is slightly damaged and the lower portion from the waist is missing. The figure is shown wearing a girdle which is also decorated with incised marks. Period IIB had also yielded a

terracotta disc (Verma, 2007, Plate—LIV 8) like circular object fully decorated with punctured designs and a muller or pestle like terracotta small object having punctured decoration in triangular blocks made by incised lines (Verma, 2007, Plate—LIV 10). A terracotta head with punched decoration is a significant addition to the terracotta repertoire of this Period (Verma, 2007, Plate—LXII A+B B7).

### Chechar-Kutubpur

Period I A is dominated by red and grey wares having appliquéd designs like twisted rope pinched, and cut patterns on the shoulders with the latter occurring in lesser quantity. Terracotta objects have not been reported. (IAR 1977-78:17-18).

Excavations at **Maner** ( $25^{\circ}39'N/ 84^{\circ}53'E$ ) about 32 km west of Patna, has unfolded a five-fold cultural sequence ranging from the Neolithic to the early medieval periods. Period I representing the Neolithic phase (not yet dated) is characterized by the pottery types of plain and burnished varieties of red and grey wares, and a solitary sherd of cream-and-red ware. The common shapes are vases, bowls, basins, *handis*, lipped basins and perforated bowls/vessels. Some of the sherds bear incised and punctured designs. Other findings include a number of microliths, bone points, stone pestles, hammers, beads and profuse iron slag. The terracotta objects comprise notable spindle whorls (a considerable number made on pottery), gamesmen, balls, beads, unpierced varieties of pottery discs and crucibles. A figurine most probably human, with a bird like head had also been recorded. Evidence of iron slag and terracotta crucibles indicate that iron smelting activities possibly took place in the upper phase of this Period. The most notable discovery of this Period is the terracotta model of a copper hoard type of double-edged axe (Pl. D) bearing punctured triangular designs at the edges (Plate IIIC, IAR, 1989-90). It bears strong resemblance with the copper hoard double-edged axe type preserved in the Patna Museum. (IAR 1984-85: 11-12, 1985-86: 11-12, 1986-87: 25-26, 1987-88: 11-12, 1988-89: 7-8, 1989-90: 10-11, 1991-92: 6-7, 1992-93: 6, 1993-94: 10-11, 1995-96: 5-6, 1996-97: 6-9, 1997-98: 15-17).

Excavations at **Manjhi** ( $25^{\circ}50'N/84^{\circ}34'E$ ) in the Sarán district unfolded a four-fold cultural sequence of which Period I represent pre-NBPW/Chalcolithic phase. This Period (c. 1000-600 B.C.) is characterized by the occurrence of BRW, red ware and BSW. Remnants of earth with reed impression indicate that houses were made of wattle-and-daub. Iron was also found from the middle strata of this Period. Other notable antiquities include pottery discs, terracotta beads, bone tools, and iron objects. (IAR, 1983-84: 24-25, 1984-85: 12-13)

Excavation at **Ramchaura**, Hajipur, district Vaishali, unearthed Chalcolithic remains from Period I, represented by a deposit of 1.20 m. Sherds of red ware and BRW comprising dishes, bowls, trough and spouts, a terracotta head and a stopper were reported. Period II (pre-NBPW) yielded BSW dishes and bowls, grey and red wares, terracotta balls, several

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pottery discs (one with concentric ridges is similar to a pottery disc from Pandu Rajar Dhibi), beads, human and animal figurines (Pl. IVB, IAR, 1995-96), bangles and a wheel (Pl. IVA, IAR 1995-96). The wheels are uniformly made. Significantly, the two Periods have not reported any metal objects (IAR 1997-98: 17-18).

**Champa** also yielded some specimens related to terracotta art, unfortunately we could not gather material for documentation.

**Oriup** situated 2 km south-west of Antichak, is the site of ancient Vikramshila in the Bhagalpur district. A small scale excavation revealed four cultural periods, of which Period I belonged to the Chalcolithic phase. The ceramic assemblages of this Period are characterized by the predominance of plain and painted BRW along with BSW and red ware. The main shapes in BRW are bowls, dishes, basins, vases, lipped bowls and storage jars. Few pieces of BRW bear painted designs of rows of dots, sigmas and dashes in white colour. Other antiquities of this Period include hearths, large number of bone tools including fish-hooks, points, stylus, needles, beads of semiprecious stones, copper bangles, core of microliths and an archaic terracotta female figurine of geometrical shape (Pl. E), fluted terracotta pieces of the shape of a pipe used possibly in fishing nets and other female figurines. Iron appeared in Period II along with NBPW. (IAR, 1966-67: 6-7; Sahay, 1978: 8-16).

**Panr** an ill reported site had the occurrences of terracotta objects associated with BRW. (News Letter, Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Eastern India (hence forth CASTEI): 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010; Choudhary, 1999: 474-476; Choudhary, 2005: 81-86).

**Senuwar** ( $24^{\circ}56'N/83^{\circ}56'E$ ) is situated about 7 km west of Sasaram in the Rohtas district, between the eastern/northeastern extremities of the Vindhyan range and the alluvial plains of the south Bihar plain. Period I has been subdivided into Period IA (Neolithic- C. 2200 B.C.-1950 B.C.) and IB (Neolithic-Chalcolithic- C.1950 B.C.-C.1300 B.C.) and Period II has been labelled as Chalcolithic (C.1300 B.C. to 7th-6th cent. B.C.). The excavated cultural sequence particularly of the earlier Periods, i.e., Period IA, Period IB and Period II revealed assemblages in a very large quantity and they include bone and stone tools or artefacts along with other remains or habitational debris of EVF phases (both non-metallic and metallic). Period IA (Singh, 2003: 28-30), i.e., considered as the antecedent stage of EVF phases, yielded both handmade and wheel made red ware, burnished red ware, burnished grey ware, limited cord-impressed ware, rusticated ware, crude BRW, a rich microlithic industry, a few triangular polished celts, bone tools, semi-precious stone beads, stone pestles, saddle querns, hammerstones, pottery discs, shell ornaments, shell tools and varied terracotta objects, wattle-and-daub houses, ten floor levels of rammed earth with post-holes, rice barley, dwarf wheat, sorghum millet, ragi millet, lentil, grass pea and field pea. Three specimens of grounded haematite nodules were also found from this Period.

This Period has yielded a terracotta bull figurine with unseparated legs and a slight hump. A miniature broken terracotta bull figurine and a terracotta figurine most probably of a boar have also been found. This animal figurine (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVII,A-15) is hand modelled and is a complete specimen. It is 4.2 cm in length and its head portion is shown with pinched nose and applied ears. Period IA yielded an almost intact indeterminate terracotta object, triangular in outline (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 70); small in size, handmade with a maximum breadth of 2.4 cm, length, 3.1 cm and thickness, 1.2 cm. This Period had also yielded a cylindrical object, broken and made of coarse clay. It (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 72) is handmade, gritty and porous and is 5.1 cm in length with a maximum diameter of 1.3 cm.

Period IB ('Neolithic-Chalcolithic') (Singh, 2003: 30-32) is represented by a 2.02 m thick cultural deposit and is characterized by the occurrence of copper objects (a fish-hook, a piece of wire, a needle, and an indeterminate object) and a fragmentary rod of lead apart from the continuation of the earlier features. The largest number of food processing/milling tools like rubber stones, pestle-pounder, pounders, querns and saddle querns were recorded from this period. Bone tools reported from this Period comprise finished, partially finished and unfinished specimens. Other finds include a large number of sophisticated shell objects like ornaments and tools, microlithic tools, beads of semi-precious stones, terracotta objects, etc. A terracotta bull similar to that found from Period IA has also been found from this Period. The specimen measures 5.5 cm and the pinching and appliqué techniques have been used. The bull has a pinched mouth and the hump had been applied and it does not have a tail. (Singh, 2003, PL. XXXVI,B-1) This specimen is dull red in colour, ill-fired and very crudely made. Two miniature broken terracotta bull figurines have also been found. One is stylistically similar to the above specimen but differs in showing a slight hump and its length is 4.1 cm (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVI,B). It is blackish in colour and its tail is broken. The other miniature figurine of a bull has well separated legs and is partially broken. The length of the specimen measures 3.4 cm and an applied hump is shown on the neck (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVI,B). This specimen also does not have a tail (Pl. F). Later Periods have also yielded more sophisticated modellings of terracotta bulls having elongated bodies, slit mouths, pierced nostrils and body parts decorated by pricked dots. An intact terracotta bird figurine (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVII,B-1) found from this Period has a transverse hole made from the neck and running upto its paws for fastening a string. Period IB had yielded a handmade rectangular object (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 67) with double perforations made at one end while the other end is broken. It is of coarse fabric and treated with a red slip. Its extant length, breadth and thickness is 5.5, 4.5 and 0.9 cm respectively. The same Period had yielded a terracotta object (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 69) with a circular flat base and a biconvex body. The base depicts impressions of reed in a 'V' form. One end of the upper biconvex surface is pinched and the other end is broken so it is not

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possible to know whether it is pinched or not. The surface between the two pinched portions is flattish and bears impressions of stalk. On one side a reed was inserted as some reed marks are noticed in the form of a depression. According to the excavator, the specimen had some ritualistic affiliation connected with fire in which it was baked. The diameter of its base is 6.4 cm and the length between the two pinched portions is 7.8 cm. Period IB has also yielded an intact handmade terracotta object with an uneven flat surface. Finger impressions are visible. The ill-baked specimen (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 73) is made of coarse clay containing husk and stone particles. Its length is 8.9 cm, maximum breadth is 3.6 cm and maximum thickness is 1.7 cm. Period IB had yielded an unslipped cylindrical terracotta pendant having a convex end and another slightly depressed end with double perforations arranged breadthwise. It is ill-fired, blackish in colour with a length of 3.3 cm and 1 cm thick. (Singh, 2003, Fig. 82, 86).

The Chalcolithic level or Period II (Singh, 2003:33-36) has yielded evidence of tin alloying along with the predominance of BRW, structural remains including floors of rammed earth and fire pits with ash and charcoal, microliths, milling tools, a large number of bone and shell objects and terracotta objects. Period II had yielded yet another indeterminate terracotta object (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 71) which is roughly rectangular in outline with ends slightly projected. It is handmade and is 2.9 cm in length, 2.8 cm in breadth and has a thickness of 1.7 cm.

The excavations at Senuwar have yielded numerous **edge ground potsherds** from Periods I, II and III (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVIII,A). These were made out of waste potsherds of varying fabrics and fashioned into various shapes such as rectangular, triangular, small triangle, leaf, arrow-head, oval and rhomboid. The edges were then rounded. Some such specimens (7 from Period IB and 3 from Period II) of different shapes but with unground edges were also found. These edge ground potsherds were probably sharpeners or polishers but some are too small to be used as sharpeners. Edge ground potsherds have also been reported from the so-called Neolithic and Chalcolithic levels at Prakash, Bahal, Daimabad, Nevasa, Songaon, Sangankallu, Tekkalakota, Chandoli, Navdatoli, Nagda, and Inamagaon (Singh, 2003: 354-58).

**Pottery discs**, both unperforated and with single perforations and made of different fabrics were found from Periods I and II (Singh, 2003, Pl. XXXVIII,B). Period II yielded the largest number of pottery discs. In case of perforated examples, the drilling was done from both the surfaces. Some specimens were bored from one side only. Pottery discs were also reported from Maski, Tekkalakota, Sangankallu, Nevasa and Navdatoli. According to B. K. Thapar (1957, Maski), the pierced specimens were either spindles or toy-cart wheels. Interestingly, some of the Senuwar specimens show friction marks along the periphery of the hole, which indicate movement of the toy-carts. These friction marks are mostly found from specimens unearthed from Periods IB, II and III. The unpierced specimens were

probably used as hop-scotches and several of them had been found from the grave pit of a child in Maski.

Periods I and II did not yield any terracotta discs. They have been found from Period III and were well decorated along the periphery of their edges.

Periods IA and II yielded one terracotta ball each. They are handmade and quite ill baked. The terracotta ball found from Period II has surface decorations in the form of pricked dots executed before firing. Similar decorations were executed by metal points after firing and such specimens were found from Period IV. (Singh, 2003: 358-62)

### **Stoppers**

The single specimen found from Period IA is a simple type and crude in execution. This specimen is partially broken and has a flat top with tapering sides. The length of the specimen is 3.3 cm and its maximum thickness is 1 cm. A slight change in form is witnessed in the stopper found from Period IB which was neatly made. The small stoppers from Period II onwards, suggest the use of narrow mouthed containers. An intact small stopper, 2.1 cm in length with a pointed end and convex top found from this Period may be compared with the interesting cone shaped stopper reported from Maski. An interesting feature noted during this Period is that possibly long cylindrical knobs of some broken lids were reused as stoppers after evenly cutting their edges. An example of such reuse evident from Period II is a 6.4 cm long specimen which was perhaps originally a part of a knobbed lid. The diameter of the top is 3 cm. When the base of the lid got broken, it was used as a stopper, after careful cutting and grinding. Lids having such long knobs were found from Period IB which continued in Period II (Singh, 2003: 368-72).

### **Toy-Cart Wheel**

Period IB yielded one thick flat wheel without hub. It has a thickness of 2.4 cm (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 32). Period II yielded a wheel with rudimentary hub on one side. Both the surfaces of this wheel are flat and rectangular in section (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 33). Significantly, it is covered with a thin red slip. The convention of applying a thin slip over the surface of terracotta toy-cart wheels was thus witnessed for the first time in this level and this practice continued for successive generations. The thickness of the wheel is 0.6 cm and its diameter is 6.4 cm. It may be noted that hubless wheels were reported from the so-called Chalcolithic levels at Prakash, Nevasa and Navdatoli. Therefore, the hubbed specimen from Period II is the earliest evidence so far as the terracotta assemblages from the so-called Chalcolithic phases in the subcontinent are concerned (Singh, 2003: 372-73).

### **Whistles**

According to B. P. Singh, two terracotta objects which can be possibly identified as whistles were found from Period IB. One intact specimen (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 38) is in the form

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of a human skull whose frontal portion is slantly cut showing two holes. The diameter of the two holes is 0.4 cm and 0.3 cm and the length and breadth of the so-called whistle is 3.8 cm and 3 cm respectively. It is hollow from inside. The excavator was successful in producing sound by blowing air through the holes. Another specimen from the same Period (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 39), differs in size (length, 4.1 cm, breadth, 2.5 cm and the diameter of the two holes, 0.4 cm each). ( Singh, 2003: 374)

### **Dabbers**

One fragmentary dabber had been found from Period IA. It has a slightly convex base and its upper end is broken (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 40). It is of coarse red fabric and there are no surface decorations. Three similar dabbers (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 41) but differing in size and having flat bases have been unearthed from Period IB. Such dabbers have been reported by F.R. Allchin from the so-called Neolithic level at Piklihal (Singh, 2003: 374).

### **Terracotta Cakes**

Three handmade terracotta cakes of varying sizes were found from Period IB. One of them (Singh, 2003, Fig. 85, 47) is an almost complete circular cake, ill-fired, gritty and porous having stone particles on both the faces and is of an uneven thickness. Its maximum thickness is 1 cm and its diameter is 7.5 cm. Another intact oval shaped cake (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 48) is blackish in colour, gritty, porous and was possibly made over grass as grass impressions are noticed over its surface. Its length is 4.7 cm, breadth, 4.3 cm and has a thickness of 1.4 cm. The third specimen is also quite intact. It is rectangular in shape (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 49) and at one of its end there are possibly some attempted perforations. Its length, breadth and thickness is 5.7 cm, 3.2 cm and 1 cm respectively (Singh, 2003: 376-77).

### **Pellets**

These are actually miniature versions of the terracotta cakes. Eleven from Period IA and four from Period IB were unearthed. These are circular, oval, roughly rectangular or irregular in shapes. All these are handmade, small in size, ill-fired, gritty and porous. Like the terracotta cakes, some of the pellets bear grass impressions on their surfaces. Two specimens, one each from Period IA (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 52) and IB are decorated on one side by a group of vertical lines. According to the excavator, the purpose of these pellets is difficult to ascertain and may have a ritualistic affiliation (Singh, 2003: 377-78).

### **Terracotta Spoon**

Period II yielded a broken, small, handmade spoon (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 53) with a handle of ovoid cross-section. The extant length of the spoon is 3 cm and the thickness of its handle is 0.8 cm (Pl. G). The handle part is treated with a fine paste of clay and the spoon portion

is without surface treatment. Present metal counterparts known as *Achamani* are used during rituals. A similar spoon of larger dimensions has been found from Period IV (Singh, 2003: 378).

### **Gamesmen**

Two intact circular terracotta objects, one each from Period IA and Period II were found. Both are flat based, plano-convex in cross-section and of varying height and diameter. Probably, they were used as games-men. One is blackish in colour, handmade, with a diameter of 2.1 cm and 1.7 cm in height. It (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 57) was found from Period IA. The Period II specimen (Singh, 2003, Fig. 86, 58) is same as the earlier one and has a diameter of 2.4 cm and is 1.9 cm in height (Singh, 2003: 379).

### **Terracotta Beads**

So far as Period IA is concerned, beads made of terracotta, agate, chalcedony, jasper, chert, shell and steatite were unearthed. Most of the stone beads are unfinished showing different stages of manufacture. The ten terracotta beads of Period IA are cylindrical (5), spherical (1), disc shaped (2) and two barrel shaped. All these are handmade, ill-fired and usually do not have any surface treatment. The perforations are not uniform in some specimens. All these types continued in Period IB. It may be noted that a new shape, i.e., biconical type was introduced in the terracotta bead repertoire of Period IB. Period IB witnessed a distinct improvement in its lapidary craft but it was confined to the medium, stone. In Period II, The cylindrical and disc terracotta beads of the preceding Period were no longer found. Barrel and biconical circular beads continued. Incised pear shaped circular beads were a new type in the terracotta bead repertoire. All these are ill-fired and without surface treatment. The antecedence of the well known *ghata* shaped beads, a common type found from early historic phases in many sites of northern India, may be traced from the pear shaped circular beads.

[Singh, 2003, Fig. 78, 1-Disc shaped, complete, handmade, irregular in outline, without any surface treatment, transverse hole in the centre, crudely made, diameter 1.9 cm, thickness 0.7 cm, Period IA.

2. Similar to above but ill-fired and differs in thickness, diameter 1.7 cm, thickness 0.9 cm, Period IA.

5. Cylindrical bead, slightly damaged at one end, handmade, without any surface treatment, unfinished, roughly made, length 2 cm, thickness 0.7 cm, Period IA.

12. Barrel bead showing irregular perforation, ill-fired, without surface treatment, blackish in colour with reddish patches, length 3.5 cm, thickness 1.3 cm, Period IA.

13. Short barrel, perforated, surface treated with a fine paste, blackish in colour, length 1.9 cm, thickness 1.4 cm, Period IA.

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3. Similar to No. 1 but differs in size and thickness. Diameter 2.4 cm, thickness 0.6 cm, Period IB. This type is a continuation of that of the preceding Period.

6. Similar to above but finished and differs in size. Length 1.8 cm, thickness 0.6 cm, Period IB.

7. Similar to No. 6 but differs in size, ill-fired, reddish in colour with blackish patches, length 2.5 cm, thickness 0.8 cm, Period IB.

14. Long barrel, perforated throughout the length, length 2.6 cm, thickness 0.8 cm, Period IB.

17. Truncated biconal circular bead, broken, without surface treatment, reddish in colour, length, 3.1 cm, Period IB

18. Similar to above but differs in size and profile, ill-fired, without surface treatment, reddish in colour with blackish patches, length 2.5 cm, breadth 3.1 cm, Period II. A similar bead is reported from Nagda (N. R. Banerjee, 1986, Pl. XXIV, 42,43) from Period I.

(Singh, 2003, Fig. 79, 20- Pear shaped circular, top decorated by incised small lines, ill baked, without surface treatment, blackish in colour, length 1.8 cm, breadth 3.1 cm, Period II.

21. Similar as above but differs in decoration. Length 1.8 cm, breadth 3.2 cm, Period II. Similar specimens with incised designs were found from Period I at Khairadih (Singh, 2003: 302-28).

Excavations at different mounds at **Taradih** ( $24^{\circ}28'31''\text{N}/84^{\circ}53'54''\text{E}$ ) located to the south-west of the Mahabodhi temple complex of Bodh Gaya, unfolded a chrono-cultural stratigraphy comprising seven cultural periods viz. 'Neolithic', Chalcolithic, Iron Age/Pre-NBPW period, NBPW period, Kushana, Gupta/Late Gupta and Pala. A few mounds exhibit a sequence of EVF phases from Neolithic to the introduction of iron, i.e., from the Periods I, II and III. Among the terracotta objects, Period I yielded conical objects, bangles, beads and possibly disc-shaped beads made of burnt earth with perforations at their centres. Terracotta bulls, other animal figurines including snake coils and figures reminiscent of Chirand, and animal heads were also unearthed. Other finds suggest that agriculture, hunting and fishing were the important subsistence strategies. Burnt clay chunks with reed impressions indicate that the people lived in wattle-and-daub houses. A few ovens have also been encountered from this Period. From the so-called Chalcolithic phase, i.e., Period II, there was a marked increase in the number of terracotta beads. Terracotta female figurines, animal figurines, discs, bangles and balls were also found (Pl. H). The general tendency was to use wheel made potteries, however, handmade ones continued during this phase. Storage jars decorated with thumb and rope impressed designs perhaps indicate the changing status of the site. (IAR, 1981-82: 10-12, 1982-83: 16, 1983-84:12-13, 1984-85: 9-11, 1985-86: 7-9, 1986-87: 23-24, 1987-88: 9-10, 1988-89: 6-7, 1991-92: 4-5, 1997-98: 14-15; Prasad, 1990: 605 ff)

**Sonpur** is situated about 24 km east of Gaya town in the Belaganj P.S. of Gaya district. Period I (subdivided into two phases Period IA and Period IB) represent the Chalcolithic phase. (*IAR*, 1956-57: 19, 1959-60: 14, 1960-61: 4, 1961-62: 4-5). Period IB yielded terracotta beads along with bone tools and a burnt storage jar having charred rice in large quantities, animal bones, BRW, red ware and black ware, a solitary copper piece, iron ore and slag. The cultural assemblages found here are contextually similar to that of Senuwar as there is no doubt that the early villagers of both the settlements were contemporary and were in the same ecological set-up. However, no terracotta toys, gamesmen or other objects have been reported.

Excavation at **Juafardih** ( $25^{\circ}08'N/85^{\circ}27'E$ ), in the Nalanda district unfolded a three-fold cultural sequence of which Period I represents the pre-NBPW/Chalcolithic culture (c. 1600-1200 B.C.) on the basis of the occurrence of BRW, BSW, red-slipped and plain red ware. The excavator has not given any detailed report of the terracotta finds. (Saran *et al.* 2008: 59-73).

**Ghorakatora** near Giriak yielded some terracotta beads and hopscotches apparently found in association with BRW.

### **Excavated Sites of Jharkhand**

Unfortunately, we failed to gather any information on the terracotta objects found from **Barudih** (district Singhbhum) in the Sanjai valley, Jharkhand.

Excavation at the principal habitation mound in the village of Turtipur in **Jhimjhimia-Kalisthan** in the district of Sahebganj, Santal Parganas, unfolded a three-fold cultural sequence of which Period I yielded coarse variety of BRW, red ware, BSW, terracotta beads and iron rings. (*IAR* 1987-88: 12-13, 1988-89: 8-9).

### **Excavated Sites of West Bengal**

Here, the excavated sites include Hat Ikra, Haraipur, Mahisdal, Bahiri and Nanur in Birbhum, Pandu Rajar Dhibi, Mangalkot, Baneswardanga, Bharatpur and Charul in Burdwan, Pakhanna, Dihar and Tulsipur in Bankura, Sijua and Moghalmari in West Midnapur and finally, Tamluk and Natsal in East Midnapur.

**Hatikra/Hatigra** ( $23^{\circ}49'25''N/87^{\circ}35'42''E$ ), Birbhum district, revealed the Chalcolithic phase (Period I) and the ‘Ferro-Chalcolithic’ phase (Period II) with no intervening phase (Ghosh and Nag, 1984-85: 116; *IAR* 1986-87: 94). Iron-free Period I is represented mainly by BRW, buff ware, a few grey and BSW and black wares, stone mullers, pounders, beads, floors of rammed earth, post-holes and wattle-and-daub fragments. Among the unearthed terracotta objects are beads, discs having or devoid of perforations and balls. A terracotta black and red disc (11.5 cm diameter) having a five point star design on its black surface executed by short punches is a notable find. Fire places were also recorded from

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this level. Period II yielded similar remains besides terracotta figurines, beads, balls and iron artefacts and slags. Only one C<sup>14</sup> date, 2950±120 (1000 B.C.) from the beginning of Period II, is available (Chakrabarti 1993:182).

The chronology of the excavated site of **Haraipur** (23°52'N/87°35'E), Birbhum, is yet to be established. The 2.6 m thick Chalcolithic deposit yielded plain and painted BRW, black-on-red ware, white painted red ware, a dull red ware, burnt clay nodules with reed impressions, a charred wooden pole (4cm in diameter), small beads, ground and polished stone celts, a stone pestle, and bone points. (*IAR*-1964-65: 46).

A small-scale excavation at **Mahisdal** (23°42'N/87°42'E), Birbhum district, unfolded a two-fold cultural deposit of which Period I represents the Chalcolithic phase and is free of iron (*IAR* 1963-64: 59-60; Ghosh 1989: 267-268). The ceramics of Period I included BRW, plain or painted in white as well as in black, black-painted red ware, red ware bearing incised decorations, plain red ware and black ware, sometimes with incised and pin-hole decorations. Two structural phases comprising floors of beaten earth with a soling of rammed terracotta nodules, reed-impressed clay-daubs, burnt husk-impressed clay plasters and large quantities of ash were discovered. Other associated finds comprise microliths, a flat copper celt with a convex cutting-edge, terracotta female figurines with pointed faces, a definite headdress and punctured floral motifs below their ears (like Dihar), terracotta stoppers, rectangular terracotta cake, ear stud, a terracotta phallus, tetrahedral objects (Pl.XLIC, *IAR*, 1963-64) probably weights (Pl. I), bone objects including pins, fragment of a decorated comb, bangles and a number of beads of semiprecious stones and steatite. A large quantity of charred rice was found scattered all over the second floor-level of this Period. In Period II, the ceramic tradition of the earlier Period continued, but the fabric became coarser. Of special interest is a small clay sealing with two symbols and a fragmentary terracotta figurine of an elephant in motion. Four C<sup>14</sup> dates are available from Mahisdal, three from Period I and one from Period II. The three C<sup>14</sup> dates from Period I are 1380 B.C, 1085 B.C and 855 BC. According to Chakrabarti, the earliest calibrated date range of Mahisdal is 1619-1415 BC. (Chakrabarti 1999: 242).

The mound of Chandra Hazrar Danga at **Bahiri** (23°39'N/87°40'E) in the Ajay valley, probed by ADU in 1982, unfolded three habitational periods. Among these, Period I, is associated with the EVF phase and is dominated by BRW, structural evidence comprising a mud floor with burnt, semi-burnt and unburnt pieces of clay with reed impressions, iron-smelting on a large scale and terracottas including net-sinkers, a terracotta head of an animal and a few indeterminate fragments of terracotta. (Chakrabarti, 1993:181). The calibrated date-range from Bahiri, Period I, is 1112-803 BC (Chakrabarti, 1999:242).

**Pandu-Rajar Dhibi** in the Ajay valley, Burdwan district, is the first excavated EVF site in eastern India. In spite of differences in identifying the cultural stratigraphy, excavations between 1962 to 1985 (*IAR* 1961-62: 59-62, 1962-63: 43-46, 1963-64: 61-62,



1964-65: 46-48, 1984-85: 97-98), unfolded a long cultural sequence ranging apparently from the pre-metallic EVF phase to the medieval period. The site yielded habitational remains including structural and other occupational debris and artefacts comprising BRW associated ceramics (Pl. J), terracotta objects including figurines, beads of semiprecious stones and other stone objects, microliths, sophisticated bone tools, metal objects (copper and iron), iron slags and a large number of household objects besides a collection of ground/polished stone tools. Painted designs (like triangles, band, comb and ladder) are found on black-and-red, red and chocolate slipped wares. Other associated finds include round or oblong wattle-and-daub huts erected over the natural lateritic soil. Faunal remains, both wild and domesticated, and evidence of cereals/grains deserve special mention. A secondary burial, showing a headless skeleton, was also recorded. The later excavations (1984-85) at this site unearthed a non-metallic EVF phase in Period I. The suggested date of this Period I is, “15th century calibrated BC....” (2006: 261).

Several burials were discovered from Period II. This Period is characterized by finer ceramics, new shapes in BRW, microliths, ground and polished stone tools, stone discs, beads of semi-precious stones, a fragmentary piece of lapis-lazuli, copper objects including ornaments, iron artefacts, bone tools, terracotta objects, terracotta figurines probably, Mother-goddesses (IAR 1962-63, Pl. LXXXIV A), with pin-hole decoration, and structural remains with post-holes and hearths. A terracotta seal with a star motif was also discovered. The same motif or a stylized star fish painted motif is found on a piece of lustrous red ware. Period II had also yielded a terracotta torso of human figure probably in an apparently dancing pose (Pl. K). The indication of a twisted torso is evident (probably suggesting a subsequent development after the attempts at Indus Valley Civilization). It is grey in colour and its height is 8 cm. A fragmentary terracotta rosette encircled by a row of chevrons (radius, 4cm) was also reported from Period II. There is a depiction of an incised lotus on the concave reverse. Period II also yielded a small terracotta double-axe (like that found from Maner) with cord impressions. There is a controversy regarding the cultural identity of Period III. The findings from Period III are similar to the earlier Period except for a more extensive use of iron and the evidence of a row of six elliptical ovens. Period III yielded terracotta objects including figurines with pinched heads, flesh-rubbers, beads and a broken humped bull (hollow inside) and legs are shown separately (Pl. L). A particular female torso in terracotta is modelled in such a way that it is able to portray motion. The sensitive modelling of this female figure along with some others are quite different from the geometrical orientation of the female bodies as witnessed at Oriup, Chirand and Senuwar. A hopscotch and a fragment of a terracotta disc with diminishing circular band have also been found from Period III.

The excavated remains of the EVF cultural phases of **Mangalkot** ( $23^{\circ}31'N/87^{\circ}56'E$ ) near the Ajay-Kunur confluence, Burdwan district, are major indicators of the proto-historic

developments of the concerned region (Ray and Mukherjee, 1992: 107-134). According to the excavators, Period I reveals only a few specimens of human figurines representing an ageless type of object exhibiting a highly generalised modelling. Of these the one coming from IX3, represents a figure designed with appliquéd. This type of figure was possibly associated with the mother goddess cult though there has not been any special attempt to delineate the figure as a female. Period I had also yielded terracotta beads, discs, net sinkers, bangles, balls and hopscotches along with the usual pottery types like the plain and painted BRW, ill-fired coarse handmade red ware with husk impressions, other wares, microliths, a wide range of bone tools, beads of semi-precious stones, copper spiral bangles and fish-hooks, iron artefacts, iron slags and faunal remains of humped Indian cattle, sheep, goat, deer, tortoise, bird and fish (including marine species). Structural remains include hearths, wattle-and daub remains along with mud floors plastered by cowdung and occasionally rammed with potsherds and granular gravels. Only one C<sup>14</sup> date is available for Period I. It is 2870±115/110 BP, i.e., 940 BC. On the basis of this, the Chalcolithic Period has been dated between 1200-600 BC. A subsequent excavation at Vikramadityer Dhibi and Madrasa Danga unearthed among others a terracotta figure bearing appliquéd decorations, game objects and net-sinkers. Period II (termed as a transitional phase between the Chalcolithic and the early historical periods by the excavators) which is apparently a mature iron using EVF phase, has yielded a large number of stylised animal forms including bulls and a dog, net sinkers, spindle-whorls, beads, bangles, balls, discs and figurines including one bust of a female. A Terracotta star-shaped figure found from MGK (Trench BI) has parallels in several sites of the middle Ganga Valley (Ray, 1996: 30) All the terracottas of Periods I and II are handmade.

Evidence of early village farming is evident from Period I at **Bharatpur** (23°24'N/ 87°27'E), situated in the Damodar valley, Burdwan district (*IAR* 1974-75:77; Ghosh 1989: 66-7). Terracotta objects have been found in association with plain and painted BRW, black-on-red, buff-on-red wares, the shapes and painted designs of which are similar to those found at Birbhanpur, Pandu Rajar Dhibi and Mahisadal. Other finds include microliths, ground and polished stone tools, bone and antler objects, burnt clay with reed-marks, floors with hearths and beads of semi-precious stones and steatite. The use of copper was scarce. Three C14 dates (*IAR* 1974-75:77) are available for Period I of Bharatpur. They are 1435 BC, 1180BC and 900 BC. I could not collect photographs of terracotta objects.

Unfortunately, a detailed documentation of the excavated terracotta finds from the EVF phases at Nanur in Birbhum, Tulsipur in Bankura, Sijua, Moghalari, Tamluk, Natsal in Medinipur and Baneshwar Danga, Charul and Santaldanga in Burdwan district was not possible here. The same is the case with Bangarh.

**Pakhanna** The Chalcolithic level of Pakhanna has been dated to 3320±400 years BP (Ghosh *et al.*, 2005: 221-32). Situated in the Damodar valley, Pakhanna, has yielded

evidence of pre-metallic and metallic EVF cultural phases, from the excavated mound of Bhairabdhanga, one of the five excavated mounds of the site. It is surprising that terracotta objects found from this otherwise potential EVF site are restricted to a few beads. However, pottery manufacturing complexes were reported. The ceramic assemblage is represented by BRW in large quantity, red polished ware, BSW, red-slipped ware, grey ware, buff ware, pale red ware, chocolate ware, etc. Painted designs (in black and/or white) include triangles, inverted triangles, loops, ladders and comb designs, horizontal and vertical lines, oblique bands, dots and dashes etc. Terracottas from the EVF phases include animal figurines (Pl. M), human figurine, gamesmen (Pl. N), sling balls, beads and discs. The famous terracottas of Pakhanna especially the ram have been found from the subsequent level (Chattopadhyay 2010: 115-17).

**Dihar** is situated in the Dwarakeswar valley, Bankura). The comprehensive stratigraphy of Dihar based on the latest excavation (2008-2009), revealed a five-fold cultural sequence. Period I, designated as the pre-metallic EVF phase ranges from 2714 BC to 2030 BC on the basis of calibrated C<sup>14</sup> date of a charcoal sample (Chattopadhyay, 2010: 107). Terracotta game objects like hopscotches, discs, sling balls were found in association with BRW and associated wares like red ware, grey ware, BSW and buff ware. Important shapes include carinated bowl with splayed out rim, convex sided bowl with sagger base, channel-spouted vessel, slightly everted rimmed bowl, vases, bowls, tumblers, (Pl. O) saucers, troughs, etc. Structural remains comprise post-holes and mud clods with reed and split bamboo impressions. Minor antiquities include cut bones and worked bones, microliths, ground/polished stone tools and tools of bottle glass. Among the notable terracotta objects from the pre-metallic EVF phase of Hirapur mound (Period I), a net sinker of more or less uniform dimension (diameter 3 cm) has been found. Period II is marked by the continuity of the earlier cultural remains and the introduction of metal, both copper and iron. Metal objects include fragments of copper, variety of finished copper objects, antimony rods, iron slags etc. Terracotta objects include figurines (Pl. P), hopscotches, other kinds of game objects (Pl. Q) and household objects. An indeterminate broken and hollow terracotta object (extant portion is 3.2 cm in length) had been found from Period II, Hirapur mound. Period II had yielded a terracotta ball (diameter—1.5 cm) and a fragmentary black chillum (Length—4 cm, extant portion). Period II had also yielded a beautiful black female torso (5.9 x 2.9 x 2.1 cm) (Pl. R). Its eyebrows are depicted by pin holes and the other facial features are etched. Pin hole decorations are also found on its pronounced breasts and coiffure. This figure has a realistic rendering of its waist, navel and its hands are broken. The lips are quite wide (equal to the length of the eyes) and are depicted by etched parallel lines. The headdress of this handmade figurine is depicted by appliquéd units that extend from the top of its head to its ears. There is a long tilak like mark on its forehead. The specimen is not uniformly fired. The neck portion is not well defined and it seems that the head has risen

from her shoulders. Punched decorations resembling rosettes or flower like motifs are found on the appliquéd units behind the wide eyebrows (Chattopadhyay, 2010: 98-124; 2012).

### Excavated Sites of Orissa

Excavated sites yielding evidence of early village farming phases include Shankar-Junga, Kuchai, Bargaon, Bajpur, Golbai Sasan, Khameswaripali, Kuanar, Sankarjang, Bhejidihi, Kurmigudi, Kantipuleswar, Sankargarh, Nuagarh and Khajeriapali. We could not gather information regarding the terracotta objects found from these sites except for Golbai Sasan.

Excavations at **Golbai Sasan/Golabai Sasan** ( $20^{\circ}01'N/83^{\circ}33'E$ ), Khurda district, unfolded two cultural Periods. No terracottas were reported from Period I or the Neolithic level (c.2300-2100 BC). Period II or the Chalcolithic phase (5 m thick) has been sub-divided into IIA (Osteo-chalcolithic) and IIB (Ferro-chalcolithic). Period IIA is characterized by different types of BRW and other associated wares and pottery decorations were incised, appliquéd, or painted. Terracotta objects are represented by sling balls of different sizes, hopscotch discs made on potsherds and spindle whorls (Pl. LIB, IAR, 1991-92). In one spindle whorl charred remain of a wooden shaft was also found. Period IIA yielded a crude human figurine of terracotta. This crude human figurine is handmade and measures 3x2 cms. A slight thinning at the top marks the head of the figurine whereas blunt and horizontal projections mark the shoulders. Remains of about 13 circular structures (one with hearth) have been unearthed. Other findings comprise a few microliths, polished stone tools, profuse bone tools/objects made of antlers and semi-mineralized bones, copper objects, faience beads, pendants and ear-studs of fish bones and an ivory pendant. Remains of a copper-smelting furnace and a good number of terracotta crucibles clearly exhibit that copper smelting activities took place in this Period. Grains of rice and kulthi and bones of humped cattle, sheep, goat and fish (two shark teeth) have also been reported. According to Chakrabarti, “The calibrated  $C^{14}$  date of Golbai IIA is in the early part of the 3rd millennium BC.” (2006: 259)

Period IIB yielded similar remains like Period IIA except for an iron tool resembling polished stone celts of the site. This Period is ascribable to 1100-900 BC. (Sinha, 2000: 322-355; IAR 1990-91: 55-57; 1991-92: 86-87).

**Khameswaripali:** Spindle whorls and pottery discs have been reported from the pre-metallic phases.

### Conclusion

1. One must keep in mind the recording of stratified evidence in the excavations, one cannot rule out a certain degree of arbitrary recording in some cases.
2. If one compares the distribution of different artefacts that collectively signify the EVF phenomenon in eastern India, we find that clay was not the preferred medium. For

example, let us take the case of Chirand. The concerned EVF phases are IA, IB, IIA and IIB. For instance, Period IA has yielded 2, IB-59, IIA-11 and IIB-38 bone and ivory objects, IA-26, IB-29, IIA-8 and IIB-8 stone objects, IA-0, IB-0, IIA-0 and IIB-14 iron objects, IA-0, IB-0, IIA-0 and IIB-2 copper objects and finally, IA-7, IB-30, IIA-8 and IIB-8 terracotta objects. More or less a similar statistics is observed from Senuwar. Period IA has yielded 4 ground and polished stone tools, 1392 microliths, 71 stone objects, 41 bone objects (finished, unfinished and partially finished), 7 shell objects, 72 terracotta objects. Period IB had yielded 10 ground and polished stone tools, 4919 microliths, 286 stone objects, 108 bone objects, 88 shell objects, 277 terracotta objects and 19 copper objects. Period II had yielded 305 microliths, 104 stone objects, 74 bone objects (finished, unfinished and partially finished), 74 shell objects, 282 terracotta objects and 10 copper objects. What is important is the fact that the varied subsistence strategies indicated a mixed economy and to survive with that particular economy, the settlers were equally concerned with the available mediums like stone, bone, clay etc. which were long in use. The purpose of making baked clay objects was basically utilitarian in the EVF phases. The other EVF sites in the study area also portray an independent domestic pattern of production /consumption so far as the objects made of different mediums are concerned.

3. The present paper has not taken into consideration the controversial theoretical frameworks regarding the movement of the communities or the users of BRW.
4. R. C. Gaur in an article (1978-79: 100-101) has observed that some of the incised marks found on the terracotta discs of the protohistoric period onwards have been later depicted on the punch-marked coins.
5. It is very difficult to comment whether rituals, cult practices or votive offerings or for that matter, magical charms were the demand factors. Obviously, there is no question of demands arising from religious ideologies. Those figurines identified by the excavators as mother goddesses may not be actually related to the initial processes of cult practices. We know that domestication of animals was an important feature of the EVF phases. Therefore, we can relate the presence of animal figurines in the concerned phases. Regarding the human figurines, the identity of a divine nature often ascribed to the female figurines seems controversial. Of course the female principle in the continuity and survival of human generations is certainly a crucial factor.
6. Even in the metal using phases or let us put it this way, when metal implements were used in agriculture or otherwise, i.e., when there was the supposed acceleration of agricultural activities, the available evidence does not indicate a marked increase in the use of terracotta objects, at least in the concerned EVF phases.
7. The techniques used for fashioning the clay like incising, appliquéd etc. continued with more elaborations in the later periods. These primitive techniques expressed a plastic

style that constituted the formative and antecedent phase of the later terracottas. It is quite difficult to trace an evolution of stylistic sequences from the present database.

8. So far as the excavated evidence is concerned, there are no examples of stone prototypes of the terracotta animal and human figurines from the EVF settlements of eastern India. Another significant aspect of these terracottas is that it is quite difficult to ascertain the composition of the clay which was used in moulding different objects. Most probably, only grass or reed was added to the clay. The composition of the clay depended on the geo-physical characteristics of the concerned sites.

There is a lack of substantial evidence to explain the continuity of the manufacturing of terracotta objects or the style of clay moulding activity from EVF phases to the early historic period. However, Chirand, Senuwar, Pakhanna, Mangalkote and other EVF sites have enough evidence to trace such developments. Unfortunately, published excavation report of eastern Indian sites never allow us to trace the stratigraphic evidence of terracotta from the EVF to the early historic. Whereas, Agiabir, very close to the eastern Indian zone, lying in the Middle Ganga plain near Varanasi, could be projected as a classic example to remove our above constraint. The evolution of terracotta objects found in stratified contexts is quite clear from the excavated findings from Agiabir, as reported by Purushottam Singh and A. K. Singh (2004). Chirand and Senuwar witnessed similar developments. The observations of Banerji (1994) regarding the pan Indian context of terracotta art evident from the excavated EVF phases, are relevant with reference to the present survey. The earliest expressions of this fascinating array of shapes associated with the basic instincts of mankind continue. Clay, the eternal binder of mankind in different ecological set-ups having varied natural resources was and is perhaps the essential medium to express the inner forces of the human psyche. The prodigal clay of Eastern India remains a faithful and silent patron.

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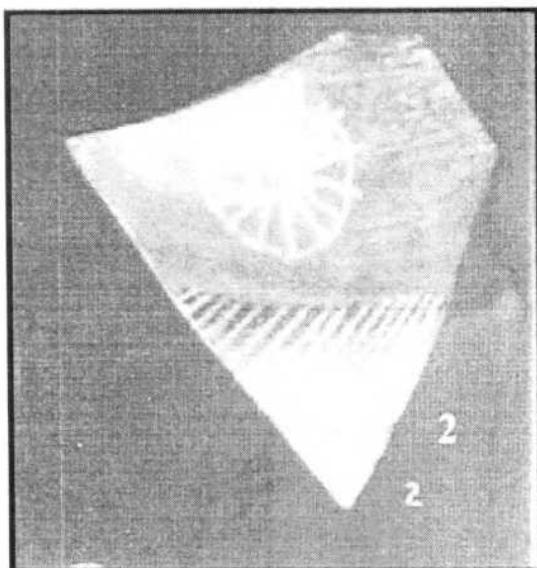
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## Terracottas from the Early Village Farming Settlements of Eastern India

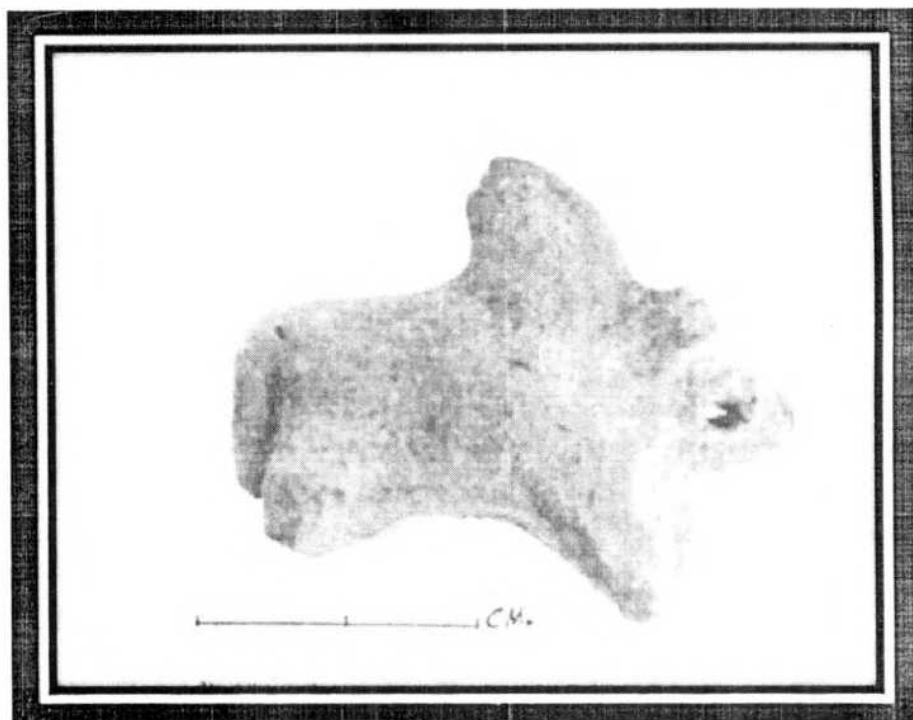
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Pl. A. Terracotta female figurine Pd 1A, Chirand (after IAR, 1971-21)

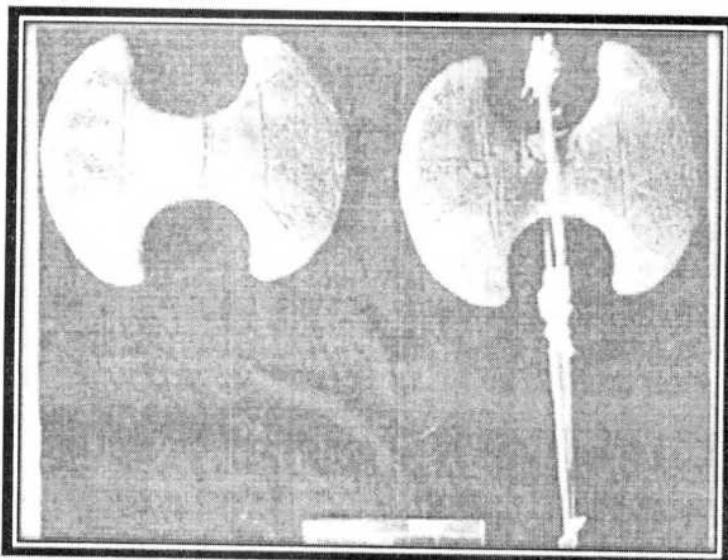


Pl. B. A post-firing scratch design representing a symbol of the sun from Pd II A, Chirand (after Verma, 2007)



Pl. C. A handmade humped bull from Pd I, Chirand (after IAR, 1972-73)

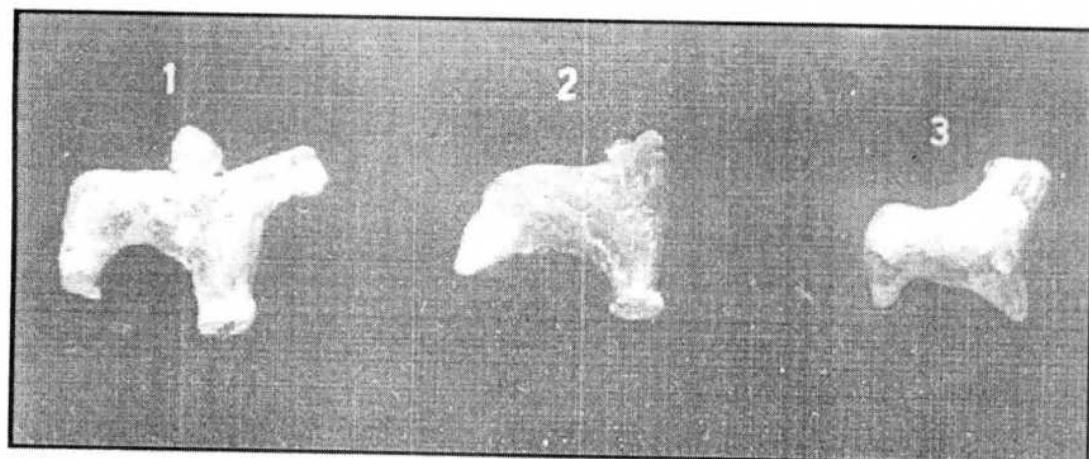
Terracottas from the Early Village Farming Settlements of Eastern India



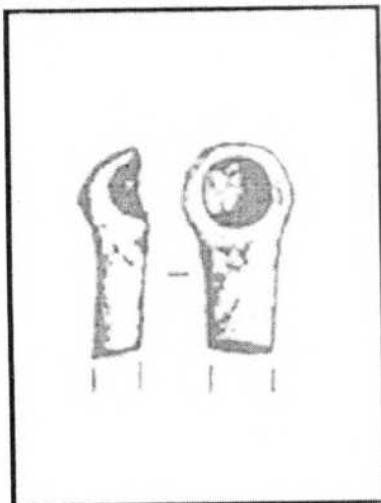
Pl. D. Terracotta model of a copper hoard type of double-edged axe, Maner (after IAR, 1989-90)



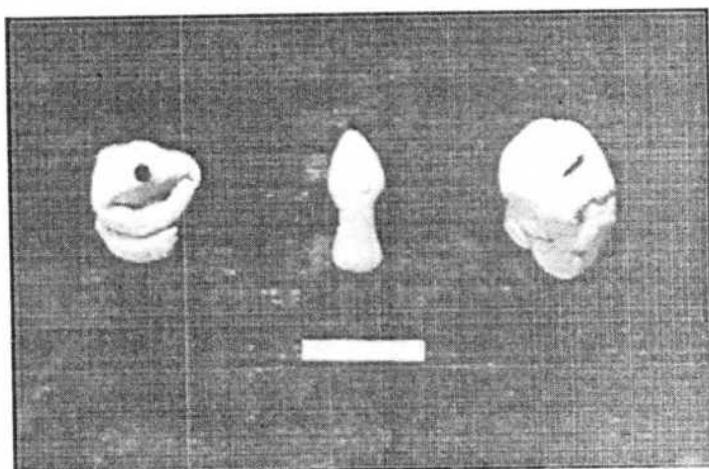
Pl. E. An archaic terracotta female figurine of geometrical shape, Oriup (after IAR, 1966-67)



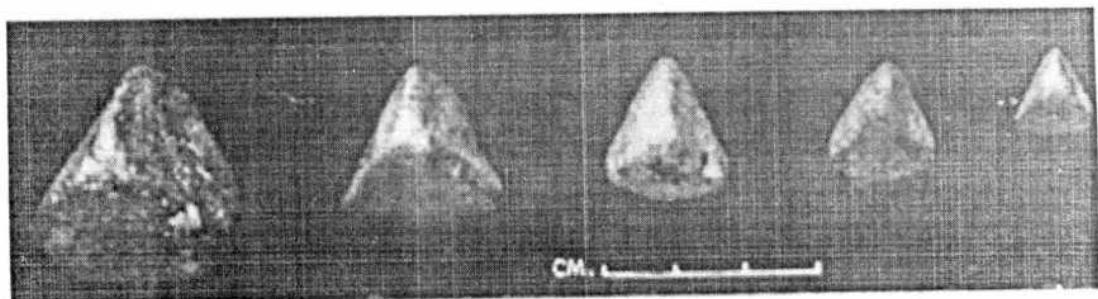
Pl. F. Terracotta bull figurine Period IB, Senuwar (after Singh, 2003)



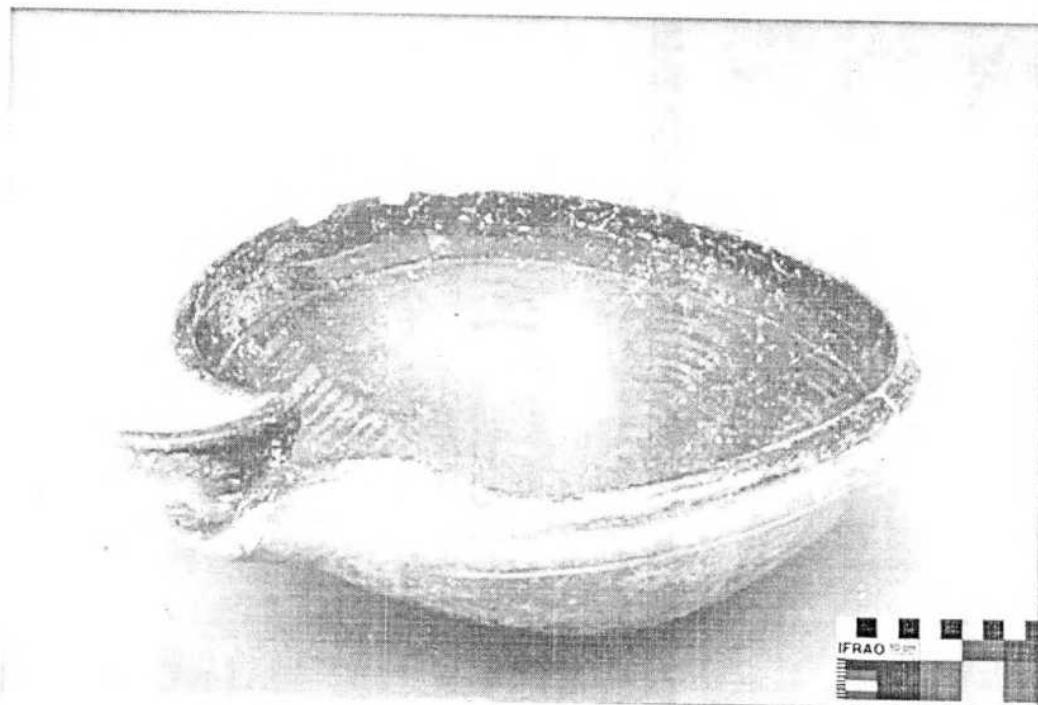
Pl. G. Terracotta spoon from  
Period II, Senuwar (after  
Singh, 2003)



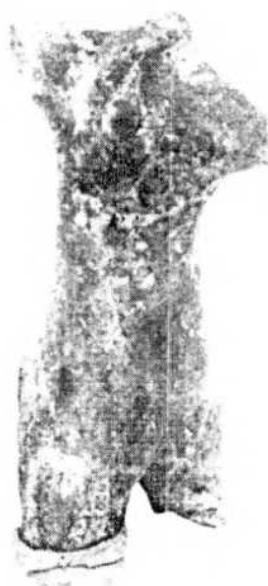
Pl. H. Terracotta animal figurines and gamesman,  
Taradih (Prasad, A.K. 1990)



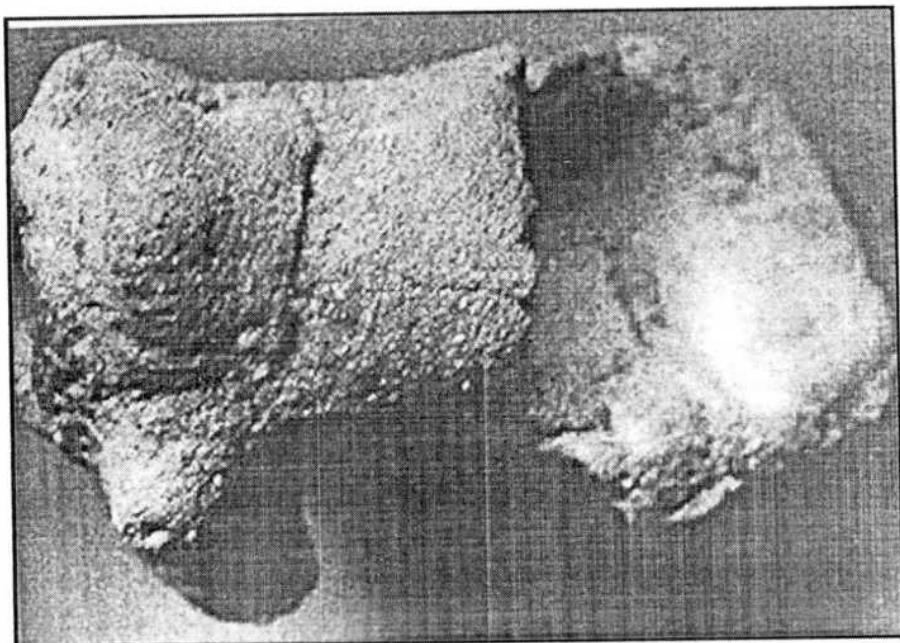
Pl. I. Terracotta weights, Mahisadal (after IAR- 1963-64)



Pl. J. Channel spouted BRW bowl, Pandu-Rajar Dhibi



Pl. K. Terracotta torso, Pandu-Rajar Dhibi (after Dasgupta, 1964)

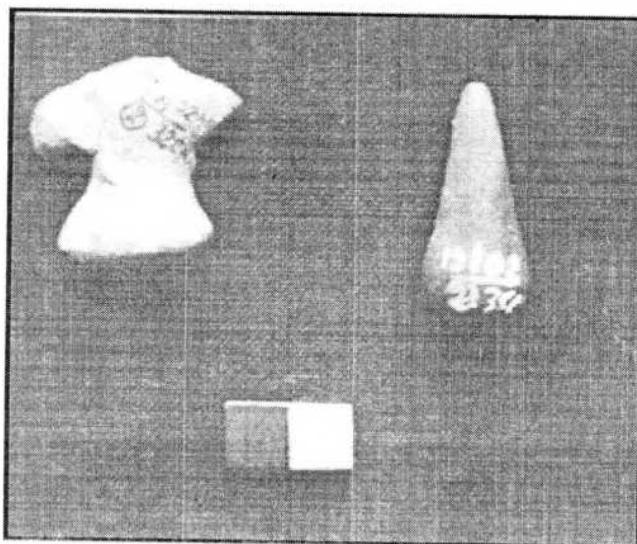


Pl. L. Terracotta Bull, Pandu-Rajar Dhibi (after Dasgupta, 1964)

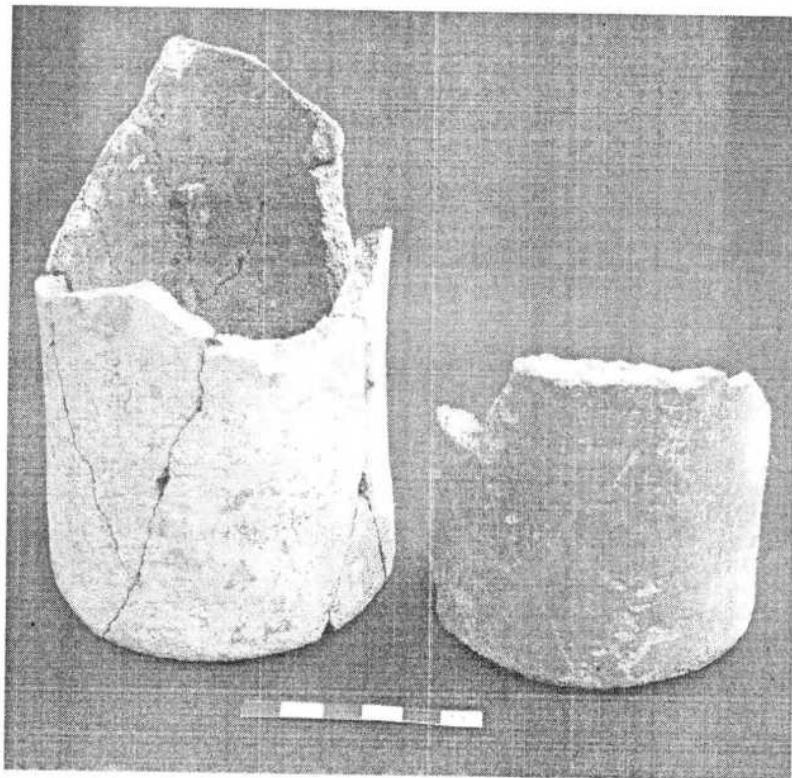


Pl. M. Terracotta animal figurine, Pakhanna

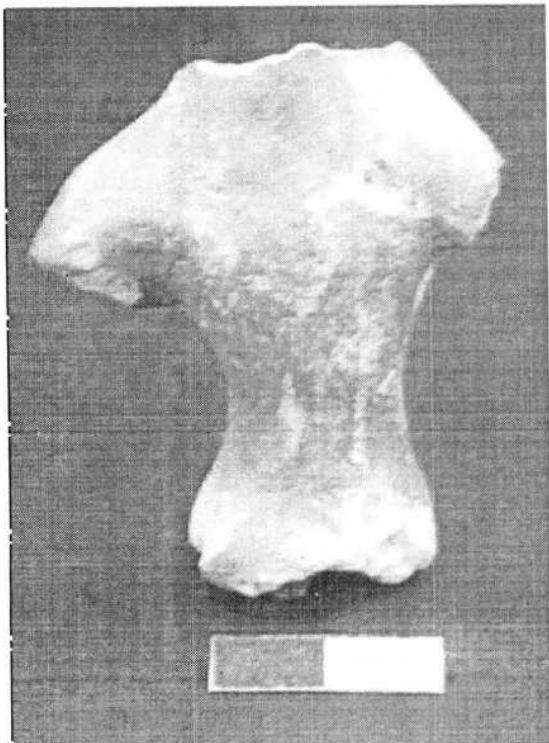
Terracottas from the Early Village Farming Settlements of Eastern India



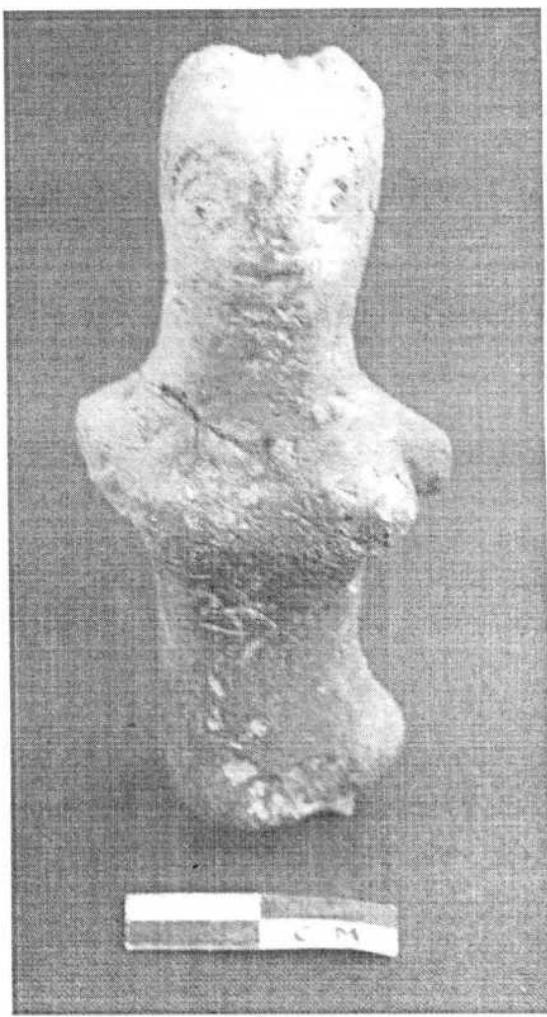
Pl. N. Terracotta gamesman, Pakhanna



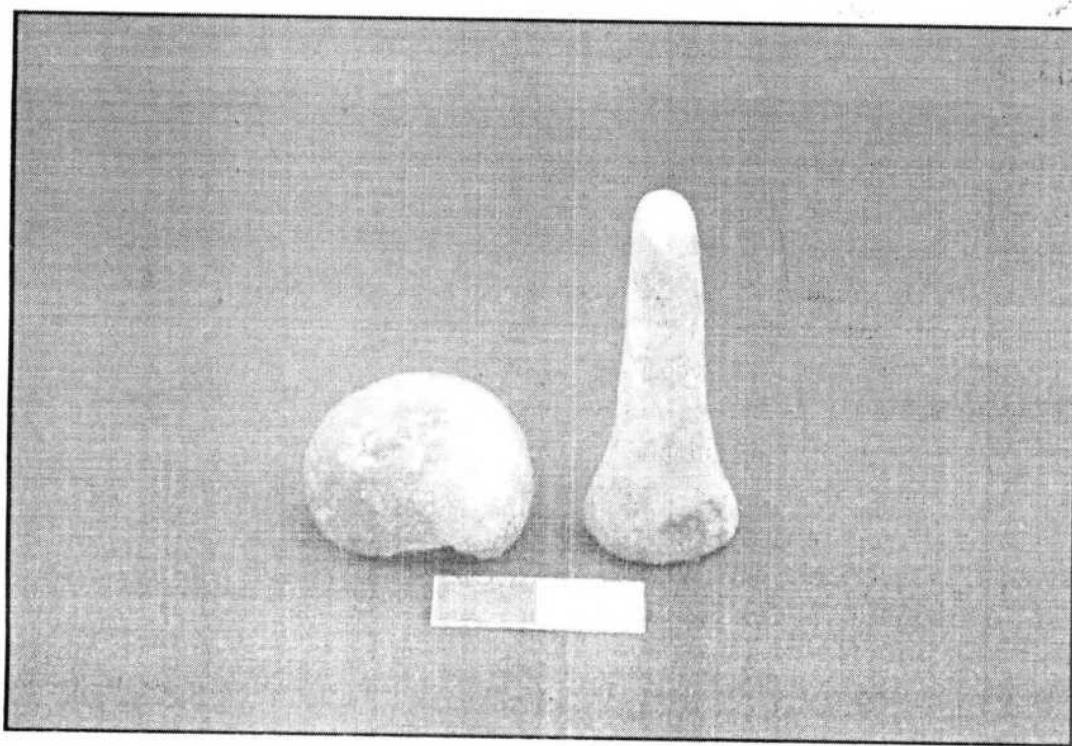
Pl. O. BRW Tumblers, Dihar (after Chattopadhyay, 2010)



Pl. P. Terracotta figurine, Dihar (after Chattpadhyay, 2010)



Pl. Q. Black femal torso Period II, Dihar (after Chattpadhyay, 2010)



Pl. R. Terracotta sling ball and gamesman, Dihar (after Chattopadhyay, 2010)

# A Search for Longevity : The Atharvaveda Revisited

SUKLA DAS

The history of medicine is an epic of splendid human endeavour ; failure and achievement and frustration as well as fruition. Attempts by the social scientists to understand cultural conceptions of disease, prevalent preference for prevention and cure, acceptance and rejection of specific modes, dependence on magical, spiritual and human agents to estimate disease however does not have a long historiography.<sup>1</sup> Evolution of medical concepts with application of knowledge and technique to the prevention and amelioration of human suffering in most societies and cultures is embedded in antiquity and medicine has always been a significant part of the Indian heritage.

Formative phase of it might have occurred during the period of Indus culture and continuing thereafter. However since the script of this extensive and multi-layered culture still remains undeciphered, we have no clear cut idea about the Harappan state of knowledge and concepts of medicine and health care which the people might have developed<sup>2</sup> though scientific investigations on the basis of antiquarian remains discovered in archaeological excavations conducted at different sites during the last eight decades since 1922 have done appreciable task to the partial understanding of the medico-surgical knowledge of this civilization.<sup>3</sup> It reflects a mature attitude of the society towards health problems that might have been prevailing at that time.

The earliest medical concepts however are spelled out in the Vedic texts, particularly the Atharvaveda. Even in the purely religious Rg Veda, one of the oldest repositories of human knowledge, a long list of diseases that afflicted the Vedic people comes under sharp focus.<sup>4</sup> Considering the number of Rg Vedic hymns addressed to Aśvins, conceptualized as divine physicians and description of the wonderful cures effected by them one can easily comprehend their elevated social status.<sup>5</sup> The Rg Vedic enumeration of reproductive health care,<sup>6</sup> healing of the lame,<sup>7</sup> the blind,<sup>8</sup> rejuvenation of the aged,<sup>9</sup> surgical interventions, amputations as well as grafting of artificial limbs<sup>10</sup> and similar other medical feats suggest that a medico-surgical system even within the precinct of religion was on its way to evolve.

Since the time of the Rg Veda, healing was a profession and the healers (bhiṣaja) figure in the middle of a threefold categorization of skilled professionals like carpenters and priests, all desirous of acquiring wealth.<sup>11</sup> The Rg Veda has defined the medical professional as one who could destroy disease.<sup>12</sup> Medicinal plants and herbs were always a part of healer's material medica. The way in which the plants were described in this text points to the early stage of Indian scientific thought. An entire hymn of the Rg Veda is addressed to the medicinal plants (oṣadhi) with special reference to their curative power.<sup>13</sup> A herbal pharmacy, it appears began to emerge which can in no way be overlooked.

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The Atharvaveda however is the oldest and comprehensive literary tradition of Indian medicine. Chief focus of this Veda is the material world or the world of man and multifarious mundane problems of human beings, hence health and sickness occur here in bold relief and medicine is involved within this framework.<sup>14</sup> In spirit, the Atharvaveda is not only entirely different from the Rg Veda but it also represents a new stage of thought current.<sup>15</sup> In the phase of Atharvavedic literature we observe a change in the geographical, religious, mythological and social background from that of the Rg Veda.<sup>16</sup> A transition is manifestly visible in the Atharvavedic text. Presumably the process took a considerably long period. The Atharvaveda was compiled later than the other Samhitās and it clearly indicates migration of the later Vedic people from the upper Gangetic to the mid-Gangā region of the east.<sup>17</sup> Consequently there was an interaction of diverse cultural traditions leading to integration of the non-Vedic indigenous traditions within the Vedic fold, resultant of ethnic fusion and cultural blend. The Atharvaveda is an important historical document of the spirit of social accommodation that incorporated diverse ideas and experiences current among the non-Vedic streams of people of the mid-Gangā plains.<sup>18</sup>

Thematically the Atharvaveda is essentially a text of spells, charms and incantations intended to protect and fulfill all worldly desires of human mind. Prime themes of the Atharvaveda, magic and medicine could not be easily reconciled with the sacerdotal themes of the other three Vedas.<sup>19</sup> It was never accorded full recognition in the brahmanical rituals<sup>20</sup> and removal of its contents and crafts from the mainstream of the Vedic priestly culture became a matter of social concern and significance. Consequently the orthodox authorities advanced the concept of Veda-trayī or three Vedas. Deliberate exclusion of the Atharvaveda was for its contents, popular beliefs and practices far from the sacrificial-ritualistic orientation of the other Vedas.<sup>21</sup> In course of time the Atharvaveda was denounced for its non-brahmanical inspirations and points of departure from the other Vedas.<sup>22</sup> The Vedic texts eventually advanced the theory of impurity of medical profession<sup>23</sup> and this trend of contempt and hostility even percolated into the Sutra and Smṛti texts too.<sup>24</sup>

Significantly, we come across the term Atharvāṅgirasah as the oldest name of the Atharvaveda<sup>25</sup> which finds mention in other categories of ancient texts also.<sup>26</sup> The term is indicative of two categories of priests traditionally associated with the service of fire. The Atharvans were noted for practicing holy magic and the Aṅgirasas for aggressive or hostile sorcery<sup>27</sup> and they along with the Bhṛgus or the priests in charge of keeping fire ablaze were supposed to be the authors or compilers of the Atharvaveda.<sup>28</sup> This internal division is clearly discernible in the Atharvaveda. Subsequently the Atharvavedic tradition produced a ritual treatise, the Kauśika Sūtra in the nature of the supplementary text that gives the most minute details of those magic rites.<sup>29</sup>

In retracing the medical history of India, the Atharvaveda provides the most crucial plank. Admittedly, in the Atharvavedic conceptual framework diseases were not attributed

to physiological functions but to external forces or influence of malefic agents.<sup>30</sup> The treatment was recognized as magico-religious healing; pacificatory and expiatory<sup>31</sup> as well as hostile black magic.<sup>32</sup> Charms were claimed to be very powerful<sup>33</sup> but charms as a power substance interestingly was used along with herbal therapy.<sup>34</sup>

A large variety of vegetation and the description of vegetal parts and plant habitat expressed in the Atharvaveda<sup>35</sup> pinpoints an astute knowledge of local flora and rudimentary understanding of plant taxonomy. Absence of reference to such an elaborate medical botany in the Rg Veda is suggestive of an old tradition of healing art which was integrated into the Atharvaveda.<sup>36</sup> This extensive knowledge of local flora, K.G. Zysk suggests linked the healers to an agrarian group of people and practice of magical rituals actually mirrored fundamental folk beliefs.<sup>37</sup> The non-Vedic people were presumed to possess wisdom to identify medicinal properties of many plants; that has been documented in the Atharvaveda.<sup>38</sup>

Though the Atharvaveda deals with charms, prayers and imprecations against malevolent agents, it contains many empirico-rational elements<sup>39</sup> that provided the infrastructure for the development of early Indian medical thought and system. In fact it can be reckoned as a channel through which the continuous tradition of Indian medical system has reached down to the earliest systematisers of medical knowledge.<sup>40</sup> The classical texts on Indian medicine acknowledge their debt to the Atharvaveda, the earliest known work on medicine and recognize that the Āyurveda has actually descended from this Veda.<sup>41</sup> O.P. Jaggi argues that the highly systematized Indian classical medicine was not a direct outcome of the Atharvavedic medicine, though its knowledge and experience served a background.<sup>42</sup> Scholarly opinions however are not wanting to suggest that despite its ritualistic magical orientation, the Atharvaveda contains some medical concepts that are representative of the later medicine of the classical tradition, rather than exclusively the medicine of the Vedic age.<sup>43</sup>

A scrutiny of the medical contents of the Atharvaveda is highly fascinating. Though animal dissection was mentioned in the Vedic rituals, the Atharvaveda made the earliest attempt to probe the 'Structure of Man' by rudimentary study of human anatomy<sup>44</sup> and to find out important organs of the body.<sup>45</sup> In course of time this anatomical tradition developed and crystallised into a definite knowledge. Such a study presupposes a practical examination. Whether that study was made possible with the help of dissection of a corpse can in no way be ascertained, though by the time of the Suśruta Saṁhitā we have direct evidence that dissection was practiced to widen knowledge horizon of anatomy and for achieving precision in multifaceted surgery.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the Atharvaveda discussed circulation in the vessels<sup>47</sup> making an apparent distinction between veins (śirā) and arteries (dhamanī),<sup>48</sup> suggestive of some superficial ideas of physiology. In fact in various hymns of the Atharvaveda we come across the terms

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like śirās, hiras, dhamanīś, snavas etc. which in the subsequent medical texts are used to imply ‘ducts’ of the body.<sup>49</sup> In the Atharvaveda reference to heart is a recurrent feature bringing an analogy between heart and lotus with nine gates.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, the Suśruta Saṁhitā too enumerated heart in the shape of a lotus bud.<sup>51</sup> It is significant to note that as early as the Atharvaveda a differentiation between head and brain was postulated<sup>52</sup> and the relation between heart and brain also seems to have been dimly apprehended.<sup>53</sup>

A proper assessment of the nature of early Indian system of medicine in all its facets is substantially dependent upon the understanding of its humoral theory treated in greater details and depth in the classical medical texts.<sup>54</sup> G. R. Bolling in his study of the Atharvan practice of medicine noted that the early Indian theory of the constitution of the body of three elements, bile, phlegm and wind does not appear in the Atharvavedā.<sup>55</sup> Surendranath Dasgupta suggests that the germinal ideas of the Tridhātu theory of Āyurveda did surface in the Atharvaveda.<sup>56</sup> Here the diseases are described as abhraja (born of cloud/water), vataja (born of wind) and suṣmaja (born of heat)<sup>57</sup> This classification is in tune with the concept of vāyu (wind), pitta (bile) and kapha (phlegm), believed to be a great balancing factor for healthy functioning of the organism; derangement of which would lead to sickness, disease and even death.

The supposed hereditary nature of some diseases seems implied in the name ksetriya or one related to kṣetra which could be passed from one generation to another, repeatedly mentioned in the Atharvavedic text<sup>58</sup> though the interpretation of the commentators is not beyond dispute.<sup>59</sup> In the Atharvaveda certain medicinal herbs have been invoked for warding off disease inherited from the parent which can in no way be lightly brushed aside. However, the concept of heredity was brilliantly developed in the later treatises on medicine.<sup>60</sup>

Archaic concept of germ in the Atharvavedic text has also been identified by scholars. The term krimi as against kṛmi has been rationally interpreted in the sense of germ as the Atharvaveda notes that it enters the human body<sup>61</sup> and is mostly invisible.<sup>62</sup> It needs to be killed by the rays of the rising sun.<sup>63</sup> Rulia Ram Kashyap’s extensive investigations on this aspect pinpoints efforts made by the Atharvavedic health providers to destroy multifarious disease-germs in their own ways.<sup>64</sup>

It is remarkable that the concept of dangerous and invisible creatures did feature in the Suśruta Saṁhitā in the context of post operative precaution. The text indicates that the powerfully virulent and harmful organisms invade tissues of patients through ulcers and wounds,<sup>65</sup> foreshadowing modern germ-theory as the scholars underline.<sup>66</sup> The concept might have been in a nebulous form in the Atharvavedic perception. The health providers however conceived fire,<sup>67</sup> air,<sup>68</sup> water<sup>69</sup> and the sun<sup>70</sup> as the most powerful in eradicating them and strongly recommended disinfectant fumes<sup>71</sup> for their elimination.

Exploration of the medical concepts in the Atharvaveda admittedly has its constraints.

By scanning or decoding the vast mass of hymns only some perceptions and practices related to health problems at that time can be deciphered but search for further details is rather disheartening. Still it is noteworthy that Indian medicine by the time of the Atharvaveda attained certain degree of cultivation. Here there is clear reference to surgical devices adopted for joining what is fractured.<sup>72</sup> Probing of urethra for relief of one suffering from retention of urine too is mentioned.<sup>73</sup> The Atharvaveda has recorded obstetrical manoeuvres for delivery of foetus from yoni through gavinaka and mehana (vaginal passage).<sup>74</sup> Incision for boils of scrofula with some sort of needle has also been reported.<sup>75</sup>

The Atharvaveda had developed the concept of sterilization and the scope was not confined to mere medication but it had also envisaged surgical devices for men.<sup>76</sup> Though the methods prescribed for making a man or a woman sterile<sup>77</sup> were intended to suppress the rival and not as a measure for population control, it at least reveals antiquity of a medical practice.<sup>78</sup>

Two para-surgery methods were mentioned by the Suśruta Saṁhitā which did not call for the use of surgical instruments.<sup>79</sup> They were fire cautery or cauterization by application of heat<sup>80</sup> and blood letting by the use of leeches.<sup>81</sup> This appears to be an antique medical heritage handed down from the Atharvavedic practices since this Vedic text speaks of leeches applied to sores and flaming torches applied to snake-bite area implicating some sort of thermocauterization.<sup>82</sup>

So far as gynecological and obstetrical issues are concerned, the Atharvavedic intent for protection of embryo (*garbhadṛiṁhaṇa*),<sup>83</sup> prevention against miscarriage (*garbharakṣaṇa*)<sup>84</sup> and easy delivery (*sukha prasūti*)<sup>85</sup> are of great social significance. This text is seen to be more obsessed with the birth of a male child<sup>86</sup> and records the methods adopted for sex determination of the offspring.<sup>87</sup>

Repeated prayers to Sarasvatī and Siniवāli for fertilization and healthy progeny are well documented in the Atharvaveda. These divinities were conceptualized as the promoter and protector of reproductive health and reliever of neonatal problems.<sup>88</sup> B.L. Raina suggests that both of them appear busy medical practitioners and were given divine status for their outstanding professional skill and wisdom.<sup>89</sup> In the Caraka Saṁhitā there is a detailed account of experienced and skilled women involved in delivering a child.<sup>90</sup> It indeed was a feminine terrain since remote past. It seems that important advisory role to the brahmanas, well-versed in the Atharvaveda in relation to child birth, was imposed in the classical medical texts as an old tradition only.<sup>91</sup>

Disease experience of the Atharvaveda is extensive. It mentions nearly a hundred diseases<sup>92</sup> and provides a classified list of diseases; a) diseases of the head b) general diseases, c) of heart and abdomen, d) of the back and rectum and e) of the hands, feet, bones and blood.<sup>93</sup> Various diseases featured in the text include akṣata (tumour), alaji (eye disease), apacit (scroftila), arśa (piles), āsrava (disease relating to excessive bleeding),

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atimūtra (diabetes), atisāra (diarrhea). Grāhi (seizure/fits/epilepsy), harimā (jaundice), hr̥dayamaya (heart diseases), jalodara (dropsy/ascites), jvara (different types of fever), kāśa (cough), kilāsa (leprosy), mūtrorodha (retention of urine), nādivraṇa (glandular sores), takman (the most dreaded fever), unmadita (insanity), viṣkandha (rheumatic ailments), visalyaka (neuralgia) and yakṣma (consumption condition) to mention only a few.<sup>94</sup>

Due to semantic reasons, these English equivalents however are subject to errors and are at best approximate. In some cases symptoms are clearly enumerated while in others vagueness pervade. From the names of these diseases it seems that most of the diseases recorded in the Caraka Samhitā existed in the Atharvavedic phase of history.<sup>95</sup>

Of all the diseases enumerated, Yakṣma occurs in bold relief since the time of Rg Veda. Close observation of the Vedic thinkers have left a body of information in relation to Yakṣma, an ailment in which one can decipher major signs and symptoms of present tuberculosis. The hymns pinpoint that it was a disease of remote antiquity and they reveal an undercurrent tension centered round this disease. The Vedic perception of Yakṣma, its coping strategies articulated by the Rg and Atharvavedic medical men and the socio-economic context including dietary choices and living conditions conducive to occurrence of Yakṣma that posed a significant health problem provide clue to the understanding of disease history.<sup>96</sup>

Takman a term in the Atharvavedic hymns implying a dreadful febrile malady is conspicuously absent in the Rg Veda. In the Atharvavedic documentation of disease, a vast space it appears was reserved for Takman fever. Pathological symptoms of it enumerated in the Atharvaveda, the Atharvan familiarity with the link between climate, season, locality and mosquito-bite and Takman and its specificity as an autumnal disease precisely correspond to the malarial fever of the present day. In fact, the socio-cultural prism through which the Atharvavedic healers viewed this disease and major findings of their enquiry provide a handle for structuring the malarial history of India.<sup>97</sup>

The Atharvaveda significantly located Kilāsa or leprosy as a troublesome skin ailment and its penetration even into the bone presumably to highlight different degrees of affliction. It seems that knowledge of diagnostics had considerably developed by this time. Since the Atharvavedic ideology however, leprosy was linked on the one hand with physical contact and inheritance factors while on the other with sins committed by the patient. In spite of their rich rational core, the classical Samhitā texts on medicine internalized the fallacy and perpetuated the misleading idea of 'Pāpa-roga' and a fear psychosis was thus being socially created, centred round this disease, a strong legacy of the Atharvaveda.<sup>98</sup>

The fact that multifarious diseases ranging from glandular swellings to epilepsy, from dropsy to multiple types of fever with their pathogenic aspects were known to the Atharvavedic healers reflects careful observation of the disease variety by the practicing medical men. Significantly, mental disorders were also within their purview. J.P. Balodhi

holds that recorded history of human race clearly suggests that even before the advent of any formal system of medicine, people developed concepts about mental illness and searched for possible ways of management. He calculates that the Atharvaveda enumerates at least twenty types of mental illness with diverse manifestations<sup>99</sup> and formulated coping strategies in their own method. The Atharvaveda describes the way psychological experience was formulated, expressed and made sense of. The healers tried to restore stability when individual's equilibrium was perturbed, caused distress and divisive behavior.<sup>100</sup>

The medical tradition of Āyurveda has by accepting Bhūtavidyā wrongly interpreted as demonology and now reinterpreted as psychiatry as one of its eight branches established a direct contact with the Atharvaveda.<sup>101</sup> Although no separate works on this branch of medicine have come down to us till date, various chapters devoted to this discipline of Āyurveda found in larger treatises include Amānuṣapratīṣedha Adhyāya of the Suśruta Saṃhitā, Urimādanidāna Adhyāya of the Caraka Saṃhitā and Bhūtavijñāniya Adhyāya and Bhūtapratīṣedha Adhyāya of the Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya Saṃhitā of Vāgbhaṭa.<sup>102</sup>

Āgada-tantra or toxicology was also classed as one of the eight classical disciplines of Āyurveda, nucleus of which can be traced back to hoary past. Its focus was on diagnosis and treatment of snake-bite and other cases of toxicity.<sup>103</sup> The Atharvaveda extensively deals with poisons and antidotes<sup>104</sup> and Sarasvatī here has been projected as the healer of snake-bite poisoning.<sup>105</sup> This text refers to at least eighteen varieties of snakes<sup>106</sup> which is of great significance. The Atharvavedic search for cure of scorpion sting, poisonous insect bites and anti-venom devices may be taken as an index of socio-environmental reality of that time.

The Atharvaveda also speaks of devices for promotion of virility. While an aged woman could be condemned as sexually dysfunctional, men since antiquity were never similarly old, they only had to undergo virilification therapy. Although women were not the focus of aphrodisiac prescriptions, negative effect of excessive use of aphrodisiacs by men was perhaps known to the Atharvavedic health providers.<sup>107</sup> In fact, Vājikaraṇa (virilification) and Klivatva (impotency) were perceived as two sides of the same therapeutic process.<sup>108</sup> The discipline of Vājikaraṇatantra embodied in later medical texts of ancient India evidently had also come down to us from the Atharvavedic practices.

Since the time of Atharvaveda an attempt was made to separate palliative treatment from the curative one.<sup>109</sup> The Āyusyānī measures dealt with prophylaxis and the Bhaisajyānī highlighted curative therapies. The Atharvaveda abounds in prayers and strategies adopted for preservation of health and prolongation of life span.<sup>110</sup> In fact the text is preoccupied more with positive health and prevention of diseases. To see hundred autumns was the most critical goal of the Atharvavedic thinkers.<sup>111</sup> Imagery of hundred autumns forms a recurrent feature in the text. Implication of the word 'śarad' (autumn) in this context appears significant. The Atharvaveda evidence clearly indicates that on termination of monsoon many killer diseases particularly Takman, the dreadful febrile malady erupted in autumn

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hence it seems that the Atharvans on knowing the precariousness of their mundane existence vehemently prayed for safe crossing of this particular season.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, a constant search for happy twilight years without infirmities<sup>113</sup> suggests a strong apathy towards death and active interest in promoting life. The text has developed an excellent tradition of robust optimism for life and living with an eye for improving the quality of life or to add life to years.<sup>114</sup> Probably it provided cue for subsequent development of a comprehensive discipline called Rasāyana-tantra entirely focussed on the study of ageing, its prevention, rejuvenation and healthy longevity.<sup>115</sup>

The medical knowledge in the Atharvaveda is garbed with a magico-religious covering but the decisive fact about this Veda is that it does indicate the beginning of medical concepts without which the subsequent development of Indian medicine is not easily conceivable.<sup>116</sup> In fact all the eight branches of Āyurveda are rooted here.<sup>117</sup> It is from this nebulous stage that the Āyurvedic concepts of medical knowledge as a comprehensive system of science and philosophy of life developed. The Āyurveda indeed was an emanation of the Ātharvaveda, a continuity of the past but with an altogether modified approach and rational understanding.

A perusal of the Atharvaveda indicates prevalence of a fourfold therapeutic system viz, 1) Ātharvanis or magico-religious healing, 2) Āngirasi or witchcraft and black magic, 3) Daivī or cure with the help of natural elements and 4) Mānusī /Auśadhi or curative treatment by application of finished products of medicine.<sup>118</sup>

The Atharvan system it appears, adopted mainly magical approach and primarily prescribed amulets and charms as power substance for healing. The Ātharvan who binds the amulet is described as 'Subhiṣakatama' or physician par excellence<sup>119</sup> and charms as being superior to all other medicines prescribed by multitude of other physicians.<sup>120</sup> This otherness mentioned is significant as it pinpoints that the practice of pure medicine by professional medical men with an elaborate pharmacopoeia had already begun. The text further notes the existence of Cāraṇa Vaidyas or a group of wandering physicians.<sup>121</sup> It is suggestive of emergence of the concept of healing art not as a mere skill but as a social system too.

Drug system probably functioned along with the charm system and a spirit of competition between the two began to surface. System of charms presumably was the domain of priest-healers while the system of drugs was practiced by the medical practitioners.<sup>122</sup> Whatever might be the real situation, value of drugs/herbs was intensely recognized in the Kauśika Sūtra and it adopted the device of administering drugs along with the Atharvānic charms. This was probably a crafty compromise between empirico-rational drug system and the magico-religious charm system<sup>123</sup> that had gone underfocussed.

Brahmananda Gupta however interprets the charm system as a method of faith healing which stimulates the will power of the patient to fight out his ailment. He has laid stress on

the psychosomatic approach of the Atharvaveda.<sup>124</sup> While discussing on the psychotherapy of the Atharvaveda, H.C. Sharma also shares similar view.<sup>125</sup> The Atharvaveda, it needs to be underlined, noted will power as the very essence of mind.<sup>126</sup> It is not unlikely that self-limiting diseases that subside on their own and do not necessarily require any medical intervention were cured by the charm system as a form of complementary medicine for mental support and feel good of the patient, a healing tradition which has not lost its hold on the people even to date.

The basic theoretical and practical positions formulated in the Atharvaveda were not entirely lost to the Indian culture. They did survive in the general stream of medical philosophy of early India as a nebulous thought. One of the outstanding features of this Veda from medical viewpoint valid for all times is that it makes a longing for a better state of existence as the fundamental motivation of mankind.<sup>127</sup> This greatest legacy of the Atharvaveda finds excellent expression in the Caraka Samhita which pronounces that no other gift is better than the gift of life<sup>128</sup> and recognizes ‘Pranaisanā’ or desire for quality life the foremost human longing.<sup>129</sup>

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# The Trials and Travels of Kāśiputra Yaśaka's Copestone

PETER SKILLING

Fragments that seem to have belonged to a single set of copestones, or to an extremely similar set of copestones, are kept today in a number of institutions in India and abroad. In early Indian built architecture, copestones or coping stones (*usnīṣa*) were the top portion of a railing, used to cap the upright posts (*sūci*) of an enclosing fence (*vedikā*). They were a basic component of the railings that enclosed an open shrine—one the earliest structures of the historical period—and for several centuries they marked the boundaries of more evolved edifices like stupas and temples.

The copestones under study here are all carved from a mottled red sandstone which is typical of Mathura. Krishnan (2007: 85) describes the decorative motifs of the Singapore fragment as follows:

The floral motif alternates with prancing leonine creatures. On closer inspection, each alternating animal and plant shows some interesting variation. One of the prancing animals is a lioness while the other has a human face. One pair of the honeysuckle motif has curved simple leaves above and palmettes below. The second pair has simple leaves below with palmettes above. These devices are ingeniously designed by the carvers to fit the narrow strip of the copestone. On the upper section a row of bells hangs from a cord... .

Pal (1986: 175) remarks of the creatures in general that “each is an agile animal and from the position of their forelegs seems ready to pounce.” Harle and Topsfield (1987: 9) describe the Ashmolean piece as a “crisply carved frieze of some beauty.”

Decoration with strings or nets of bells is frequently mentioned in Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist narrative literature—for example, *kiṅkanikā* and *kimkanijāla*<sup>1</sup>—and nets of suspended bells are regularly depicted on coping stones at Bharhut (but those at Sanchi are plain).<sup>2</sup> The bell motif adorns a coping from Kausambi (Tripathi 2003: Fig. 27) and the copings of the “Jaina Stupa at Mathura” (Smith 1901: Chap. XV), with the important difference that they are carved on both sides, while the pieces studied here are decorated on one side only. Some of the Mathura pieces have a frieze of palmettes and prancing animals (ib., Pl. LXXVIII, Fig. 3; LXXIX, Fig. 2; LXXX, Fig. 3; LXXXI, Fig. 1, etc), but they all differ from our pieces in the execution of the designs. Quintanilla dates the Mathura copings with the alternating animal/palmette motif beneath a row of bells date from circa 100 BCE onwards (2007, p. 76 and Figs. 75-80).<sup>3</sup>

Härtel (1986: 102) notes that the height of the examples known to him “keeps between 16.5-17.5 cms, the depth varies from 12.8-13.7 cms.” Since not a single complete example seems to be known, it is not possible to give the average length of a section. The length of some of the fragments is not available; this makes it difficult or impossible to calculate even approximately the size of the original railing or railings.

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The extraordinary feature of these copestones is that many of the fragments bear the same donative record—fifteen are presented here. Härtel (1986: 101) remarked that up to the time of his writing he had “not come across a similar example of repetition of the same text on obviously alike architectural pieces,” and so far as I know no new examples of such repetition have since come to light. Bhattacharya (1987: 49) described the record as “a rare incident in the history of Indian epigraphy.”

The single-line inscription is engraved lengthwise along the face of the rounded top, above the string of bells, in a variety of Brāhmī dated by Härtel and Bhattacharya to the first century CE. The text is in Prakrit influenced by Sanskrit. It is straightforward enough, reading in its complete version:<sup>4</sup>

*rūṇño gopālyā putrasya suyamitrasya pīṭhamudena kāśiputrena yaśakena kāritum.*

Härtel (1986) renders this as:

Caused to be made by Kāśiputra Yaśaka, the confidant of King Sūryamitra, the son of Gopālī.

The only unusual term is *pīṭhamuda*, which, according to Härtel, is not known from any other epigraph. He writes that Sanskrit *pīṭhamarda* is “a well-known official of the king of ancient times.” The compound is given in the usual dictionaries; Monier-Williams, for example, defines *pīṭhamarda* as “a companion, parasite, MBh. iv, 674 (= *rājapriya*, *Nīlak*); the companion of the hero of a drama in any great enterprise... a dancing master who teaches courtesans...”<sup>5</sup> Out of the range of possible meanings, Härtel chooses “confidant” (1977: 193, n. 11; 1986: 103).<sup>6</sup> Several writers (Czuma 1985; Okada 2000; Asthana 1999) seem to have been unaware of the dictionary meanings or of Härtel’s exegesis; without any explanation they interpret the record to mean “made a throne” (*pīṭham* ... *kāritum*). This is not viable, since, by making an accusative singular out of *pīṭham*, it leaves an unexplained—*udena* suspended in syntactical space. Furthermore, they all call the donor the “trusted or faithful companion” of the king, thereby putting the word *pīṭha* to double use.

The *Sāhityadarpana*, composed in the fourteenth century by Viśvanātha Kavirāja, indicates a high status for the *pīṭhamardaka*, describing him as ‘the highest in rank, among the various classes of assistants etc.’<sup>7</sup>. The commission of such an extensive railing indicates that Kāśiputra Yaśaka was wealthy and vain enough to have his name and title inscribed so many times on an (apparently) single railing.

Bhattacharya (loc. cit.) notes that “in this record the object of donation is not mentioned and the expression for donation is not *dānum* but *kāritum*, a fact which reminds us of the Bharhut record *toruṇum kāritum* and the Nasik record *lenum kāritum*. In this case it is quite irregular not to mention the object of donation.” Even closer in time to our record is the Pabhosā cave inscription which also has *lenum kāritum* (see below).

The artefact and the deceptively simple inscription raise intriguing questions. Who was King Sūryamitra? Mitras are many in early epigraphy and coinage, and among them there has been more than one Sūryamitra. To which Mitra line did Sūryamitra belong? The

excavations at Sonkh provided good numismatic evidence for a succession of first-century BCE Mitras at Mathura, starting with Gomitra; Härtel concludes that the second, Sūryamitra, “had not only been the most important but also the Mitra king with the longest reign.”<sup>8</sup> On the basis of stylistic and epigraphic considerations, however, Härtel decided that the copestones “belong rather to the Christian era and thereafter with certainty.” The Sūryamitra of the copestones was therefore different from the Sūryamitra of Mathura, and ruled in the region of Pañcāla, perhaps at Ahicchatra, in the first century CE (1986: 105). His mother, Queen Gopālī, may be the mother of King Bahaspati (Bṛhaspati) mentioned in a cave inscription from Pabhosā near Kausambi.<sup>9</sup> The coping inscriptions, Bahaspati’s inscription is undated.

Asthana does not address the issue of Sūryamitra’s identity; she writes that the National Museum pieces “appear to belong to the transitional phase of Śuṅga-Kushāṇa age,” first century BCE to first century CE.

What was the original site of the railing? Mathura itself and Ahicchatra have been suggested, but recent evidence makes Mathura more likely, if not certain. The late R.C. Sharma (Sharma et al. 2006: 13) wrote that

[M]any more pieces of this nature were registered from Mathura in the office of the Registering Officer, Agra, in 1976. It appears that a stupa was built in the vicinity of Mathura and the donor of this complex was one and the same. The pieces may be placed in the late first century BCE. Both Härtel and Bhattacharya found the fourteen pieces scattered at different places, i.e. Berlin, Kolkata, New Delhi, etc., thus forming their opinion that the donor or the reigning king was a different Sūryamitra. They were probably not aware of several other similar items registered at Agra, the provenance of which was reported to be Mathura.

It is unfortunate that the Sharma, who was director of the Mathura Museum in the 1970s, did not give further details, above all provenances, of the pieces that he mentions. However, the publication of ten fragments belonging to the National Museum, New Delhi, and their ascription to Mathura seems to settle the question—at least of the general place of origin. The specific site remains unknown.

What was the nature of the monument for which the copestone was made? There is no evidence in the inscription that it need have been Buddhist. It could have been Buddhist or Jaina or Brahmanical, or it could have protected the precincts of a *caitya-vrksa*, or the shrine of a *nāga*, a *yakṣa*, or a goddess. The structure could have been a square enclosure, an apsidal temple, or a stupa. What was its fate? Was it attacked, and its parts thrown down? Why have none of the copestones been found in association with and kept together with uprights or crossbars, or corner pieces?

The pieces show how the components of a single architectural structure can be widely dispersed, making the tasks of inventory and assessment difficult. The fact that architectural pieces of this size and number could have been unearthed and then dispersed so widely

in the second half of the twentieth century warns us just how precarious our archaeological and artefactual knowledge bases can be.

### Yaśaka's Copestone: A Revised Inventory

In his 1977 article, Härtel listed seven inscribed fragments and transcribed the inscriptions. In his revised and enlarged English version published in 1986, he listed ten fragments with inscriptions. As far as I know, the current whereabouts of his Nos. 3, 5, 6, and 9 are unknown. Czuma (1985: 56) knew eleven fragments at the time of writing, equivalent to Härtel's 1, 4, and 10, adding the Dayton Art Institute fragment, not mentioned by Härtel, and one "in a private collection in New York." Harle and Topsfield (1987: 9) mention "at least fifteen other portions" in addition to the Ashmolean fragment, without giving any details. I give here a revised inventory of fifteen published inscribed fragments, according to the sources available to me. The first ten items are those listed in Härtel 1986, with additions to the bibliography as appropriate. The most recent additions to the family are the inscribed fragments from the Neotia Collection (Mumbai) and the Asian Civilisations Museum (Singapore) (Nos. 14, 15).

#### A. Inscribed Fragments

A.1. H.P. Poddar collection, Kolkata, India (Härtel 1986: Fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> Dimensions not available.

Inscription *rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamadena kāśīputrena yaśakena kāritam.*

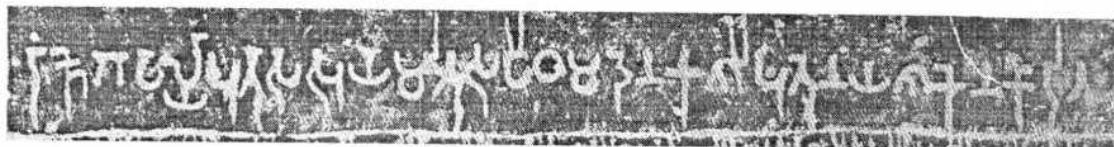


Fig. 1

A.2. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK (Härtel 1986: Figs. 2a, 2b; Ashmolean (Harle and Topsfield 1987: Cat. No. 10 and Colour Plate 3). 97.8 x 17.8 cm (1983.24; purchase).

Inscription */// mñō gopāly[ā] putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamadena [kā]śīputrena yaśakena kāritam.*

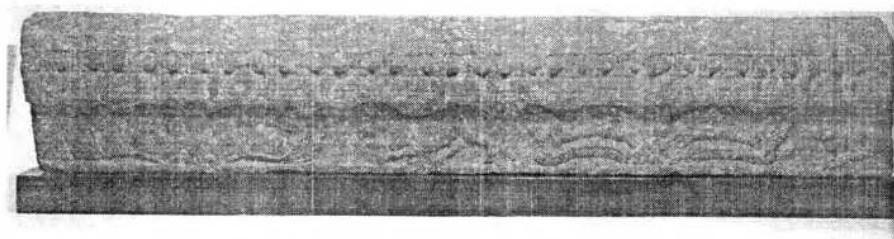


Fig. 2

A.3. Whereabouts unknown (Härtel 1986: Fig. 3). Dimensions not available.  
Inscription // [p]īthamade kuśīputrena yaśakena kāritam.

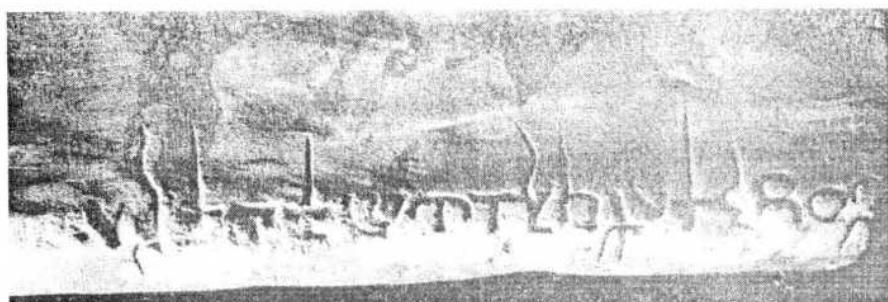


Fig. 3

A.4. MIK, Berlin, Germany (Härtel 1986: Figs. 4a, 4b; Bhattacharya 1987: Fig. 8; Doshi 1998: Cat. No. 21). 17.0 x 94.5 cm, MIK 10092.

Inscription rāmño gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamadena kuśīp[u] //.

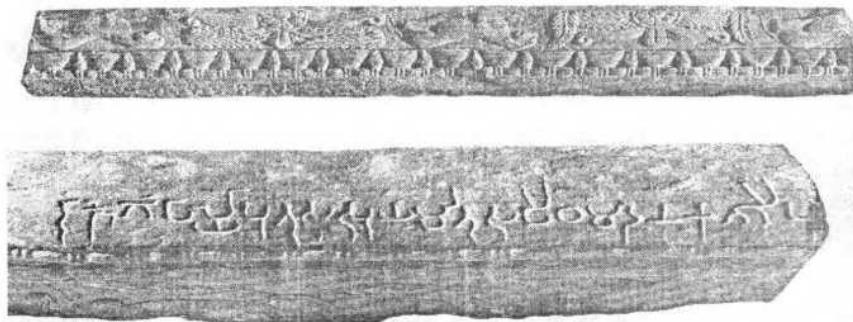


Fig. 4

A.5. Private collection, Zürich, Switzerland (Härtel 1986: Fig. 5). Dimensions not available.

Inscription rāmño gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamādenā kuśīputrena yaśakena kāritam.



Fig. 5

The Trials and Travels of Kāśiputra Yaśaka's Copestone

A.6. Spink & Son Ltd., London, UK (Härtel 1986: Fig. 6). Dimensions not available.  
Inscription // *putrena yaśakena kāritam.*



Fig. 6

A.7. National Museum, New Delhi, India (Härtel 1986: Fig. 7; Asthana 1999:114b).  
Acc. No. 67.17b. Dimensions not available.<sup>11</sup>

Inscription *rāmñō gop[ā]lyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīhumadena kuśiputrena //*.

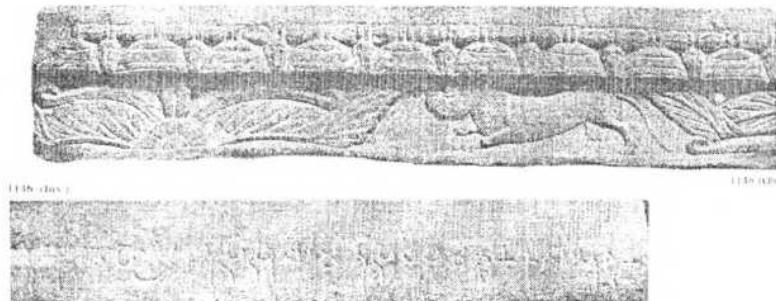


Fig. 7

A.8. National Museum, New Delhi, India (Härtel 1986: Fig. 8; Asthana 1999:114a).  
Acc. No. 67.17a. Dimensions not available.

Inscription: *rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyami[tra] //*



Fig. 8

A.9. Private collection, Zürich, Switzerland (Härtel 1986: Fig. 9). Dimensions not available.

Inscription *rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa ///.*



Fig. 9

A.10. Los Angeles County Museum, California, USA (Härtel 1986: Fig. 10a, 10b; Pal 1986: S53a-b): Two fragments—S53a H 16.5 cm W 101.0 cm; S53b 16.5 x 64.0 cm; inscription is on the shorter fragment S53b (see photo in Pal 1986: 176) (purchase from the Nasli and Alice Heeramanneck Collection).

Inscription: *rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthumadena kāśi[pu].*

Härtel considers No. 10 to be somewhat later than its fellows, perhaps a substitute for a damaged or missing segment (1986: 106).

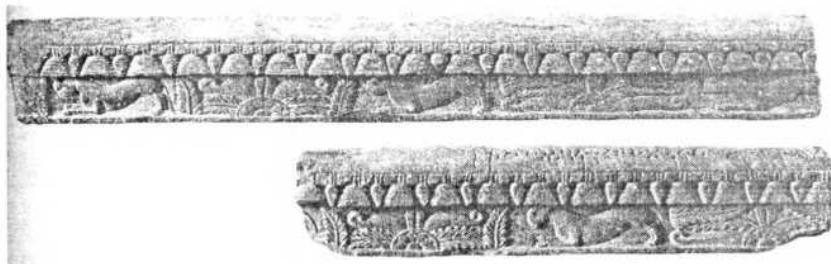


Fig. 10

A.11. Dayton (Ohio) Art Institute, USA (Czuma 1985: Cat. No. 6): 19.7 x 96.5 cm (69.8, purchase).

Inscription not given in Czuma 1985 or visible in photograph.



Fig. 11

The Trials and Travels of Kāśiputra Yaśaka's Copestone

A.12. National Museum, New Delhi, India (Asthana 1999:115/5). Acc. No. 76.228/5.  
Dimensions not available.

Inscription: /// [pī]thamadena kuśiputrena kuśiputrena yaśakena kāritum.

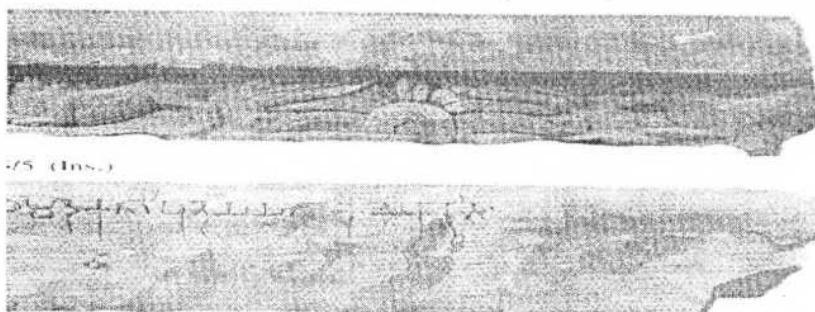


Fig. 12

A.13. National Museum, New Delhi, India (Asthana 1999:115/8). Acc. No. 76.228/8.  
Dimensions not available.

Inscription: rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamadena kā ///.



Fig. 13A



Fig. 13B

A.14. Neotia Collection, Jñāna Pravāha, Varanasi, India (Sharma et al. 2006: Cat. No. 2.)  
16 x 66 cm.

Inscription /// sa pīthamudena kuśiputrena yaśakena kāritum.

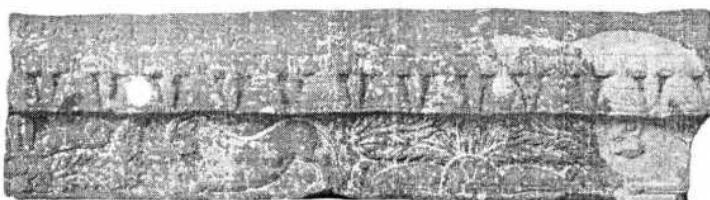


Fig. 14

A.15. Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore (Krishnan 2007: 84-85 and; inscription on p. 268 (1988.732). 22.2 x 102 cm.

Inscription: *rāmñō gopālyā putrasa suyamitrasa pīthamadena kāśīputrena yaśake(na) ///*

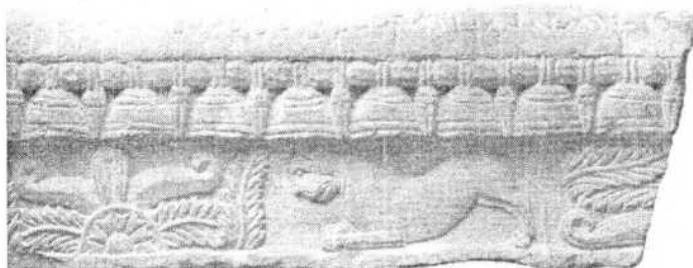


Fig. 15

### B. Uninscribed Fragments

B.1. Musée Guimet, Paris, France (Okada 2000: Cat. No. 3). MA 3551 (Gift, 1974). The Guimet fragment appears to be the second smallest of those studied here (after Naional Museum 76.228/1).

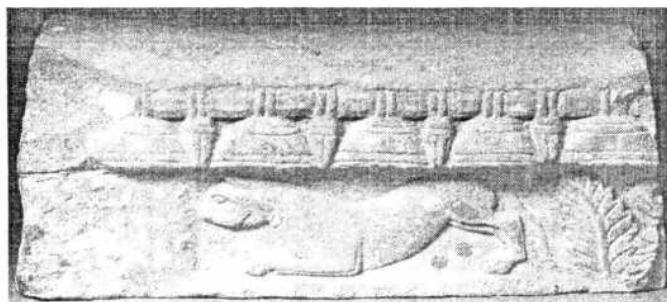


Fig. 16

B.2. National Museum, New Delhi, India (Asthana 1999: Cat. Nos. 115/1-4, 6, 7). Acc. Nos. 76.228/1-4, 6, 7. Six fragments. Dimensions not available.



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

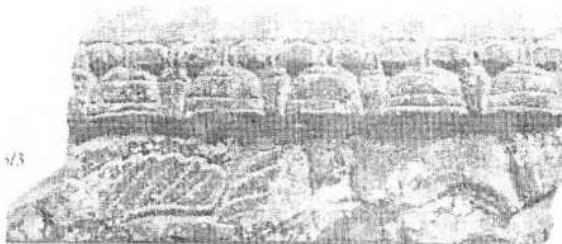


Fig. 19

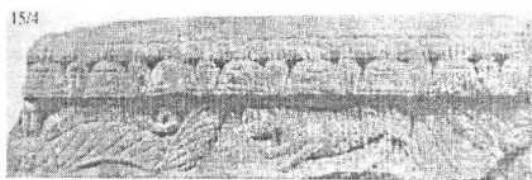


Fig. 20

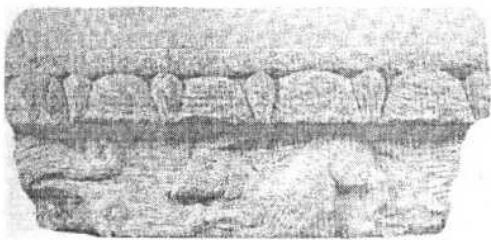


Fig. 21

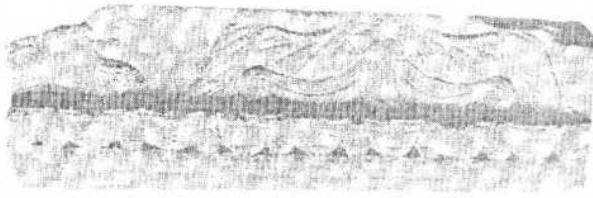


Fig. 22

B.3. Amarillo Museum of Art, Amarillo Texas, USA, Acc No. SC 2006.74. 108 cm long.<sup>12</sup> This piece, in which winged animals face towards a central honeysuckle motif, has the usual string of bells along the top, and though uninscribed, might belong to be from the same group. It is possible it is from a different monument.

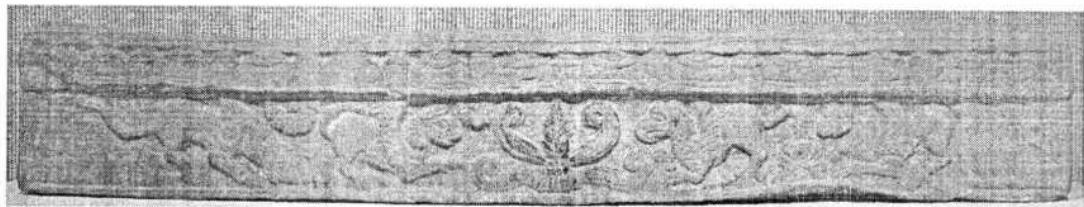


Fig. 23

It is likely that other fragments, inscribed or uninscribed, await notice.<sup>13</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Giuliana Martini, Gauri Parimoo Krishnan, Pratapaditya Pal, Amina Okada, and Lilian Handlin for providing information and materials at short notice. I thank the Musée Guimet and Amarillo Museum of Art for their prompt responses and for the photographic documentation.

Notes

- 1 For further, later literary references, see Doshi (ed.) 1998: 30 (quoting Roth).
- 2 For a good sampling of pieces with nets of bells from Bharhut, see Chandra 1970, figs. 54-60, 62-65.
- 3 For the palmette—the *nāgapuspa* or so-called “Indian honeysuckle” relief—see e.g. S.P. Gupta 1980, pp. 99-115.
- 4 Apparently the credit for the first publication of any of Yaśaka’s copestone inscription goes to Lahiri (1974: 153-154—or perhaps Lahiri 1972 [not seen: reference from Härtel]). For sake of completeness, one should mention S.P. Tewari, “Early Epigraphical References to Some Royal Attendants,” *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* VIII, pp. 57-62 (not seen: according to Härtel, p. 108, n. 3, Tewari deals with the Poddar inscription published by Lahiri without taking Härtel’s 1977 paper into account or adding any new material).
- 5 Monier Monier-Williams, A *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, [Oxford], repr. New Delhi, 2001, p. 629.
- 6 Given the complete lack of context, I cannot offer anything better; however, I would expect the term to mean a more concrete and immediately recognizable rank or position rather than the subjective and vague—albeit exalted—“confidant,” which seems more suitable to a drama than for a proud public self-advertisement.
- 7 84-85, *uttamāḥ pīṭhamardādyāḥ madhyau viṭavidūṣakau / tathā śakāraceṭādyā adhamā parikārtitāḥ*, “The highest in rank, among the various classes of assistants, are ‘comrades’, etc. In the middle rank among assistants are the humble friend and the buffoon:—in like manner the left-hand brother-in law, domestics, etc., are called the lowest in rank” (Ballantyne)-quoted by G.H. Schokker, *Pādatādītaka* of Śyāmīlīka, Dordrecht & Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, Vol. I, p. 44, n. 135. I am grateful to Pratapaditya Pal for the reference.
- 8 Härtel 1993: 85-86; for the inscribed copper coins, nos. 54-55 (*gomitasu*), 56-60 (*suyamitasu*) see 311-312 and corresponding figs., p. 318. For the Mathura Mitras see further Härtel 1987: 103-105, Härtel 2007.
- 9 For the inscription see Führer 1894, Inscription No. I, p. 242; Tsukamoto 1996 (I) IV Pabhosa I, pp. 694-695. Harry Falk (personal communication, 16 September 2011) notes that Gopāliā putrasa compares to Gopāliputra at Pabhosa, and in these cases should be a *gotra* name, of the Kṛṣṇaparāśā Vāsiṣṭhas (John Brough, *The early Brahmanical system of gotra and pravara*, Cambridge 1953: 174). See in this context Falk 2006.
- 10 Czuma mentions two owned by H.P. Poddar, Calcutta. Pratapaditya Pal (personal communication, 25 August 2011) saw several copestones in Poddar’s collection in the 1970s; he states that this collection was the source of the Neotia and LACMA fragments, as indeed of most of the copestones that are outside of India.
- 11 Bhattacharya (1976: 57, n. 2) remarks that he noticed “four copies in the reserve collection of the National Museum at New Delhi.” Now that ten fragments have been published and illustrated in Asthana 1999, one hopes that all the National Museum fragments are now accounted for.

## The Trials and Travels of Kāśiputra Yaśaka's Copestone

- 12 I am grateful to Pratapaditya Pal for information about this fragment (25.08.2011) and to Kay Kennedy, *Director of Development, for the image.*
- 13 See for example the piece from Mathura in the Indian Museum, described but not illustrated in Chakrabarti 2006, VII, No. 4: “Fragment of coping stone ... carved with half-lotus and palmette and animal figure alternatively. Animals represented here are single-horned rhinoceros and two antelopes. Above this there is a row of bells hanging from a string of beads and reels. The reverse represents an identical decoration of bells hanging from a string of beads and reels. Below it there is an undulating creeper decoration.” This belongs to the general family but not the Yaśaka group.

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# Playing Sudoku on the Verso of the ‘Muziris Papyrus’ : Pepper, Malabathron and Tortoise Shell in the Cargo of the *Hermapollon*\*

FEDERICO DE ROMANIS

To Romila Thapar

Among the ships crossing the Arabian Sea in the first centuries of the Christian era, those that sailed from Egypt to the Malabar Coast were distinctive because of their size. The author of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* describes these vessels as ‘very big’ ( $\muέγιστα$ )<sup>1</sup>, a characterization he uses only one other time in this text, in reference to the Indian ships that sailed from the Coromandel coast to the Ganges or to the Malay peninsula<sup>2</sup>. According to him, the rationale behind such uncommon dimensions was to accommodate the exceptional quantities of pepper and malabathron being transported to Egypt: “Very big ships sail to these [sc. Limyrike’s] emporia on account of the weight and the volume of the pepper and malabathron”.

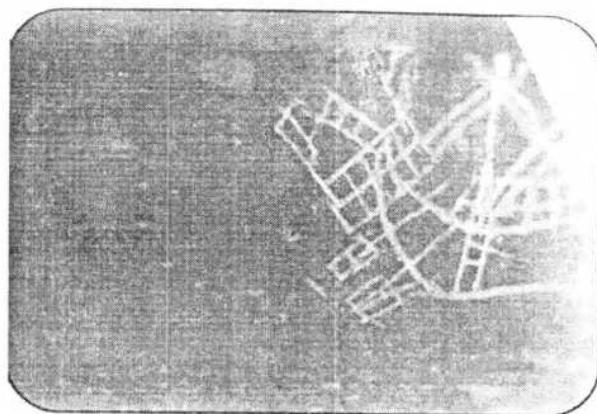


Fig. 1. Rouletted Pot Sherd with Graffito from Alagankulam. Picture from Sridhar 2005

The exceptional size of these vessels, combined with their exotic provenance or destination, elicited the enthusiastic admiration of the Indian and the Mediterranean worlds alike. Their images were reproduced in the ports of the Indian Ocean<sup>3</sup>. Tamil poets of the Sangam age praised them as the perfect and wonderful constructions of the *Yavanar*<sup>4</sup>. At the beginning of the III cent. AD, when the golden age of this pattern of trade was coming to an end, Philostratus still evoked them as an allegory of a universe wisely ruled by a supreme God and other subordinate deities:

“[...] we will [...] take a ship, such as the Egyptians construct for our seas and launch for the exchange of Egyptian goods against Indian wares. For there is an ancient law in regard to the Red

Sea, which the king Erythras laid down, when he held sway over that sea, to the effect that the Egyptians should not enter it with a vessel of war, and indeed should employ only a single merchant ship. This regulation obliged the Egyptians to contrive a ship equivalent to several at once of those which other races have; and they ribbed the sides of this ship with bolts such as hold a ship together, and they raised its bulwarks and its mast to a great height, and they constructed several compartments, such as are built upon the timber balks which run athwart a ship, and they set several pilots in this boat and subordinated them to the oldest and wisest of their number, to conduct the voyage: and there were several officers on the prow and excellent and handy sailors to man the sails; and in the crew of this ship there was a detachment of armed men, for it is necessary to equip the ship and protect it against the savages of the Gulf that live on the right hand as you enter it, in case they should ever attack and plunder it on the high seas"<sup>5</sup> (transl. Conybeare 1912: 311).

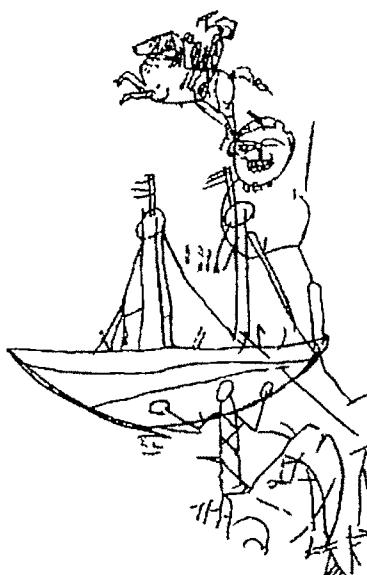


Fig. 2. Graffito from Khor Rori. Picture from Avanzini 2008

The export of Malabar pepper, either westwards or eastwards, required ships considered remarkable for their size in later historical periods as well. Those ranked by Marco Polo as the 'first among the wonders of India' are said to have been capable of a load of 5,000 or even 6,000 *espoutes/sporte* of pepper<sup>6</sup>. More modest but still remarkable (1,000/1,200 *bahār*<sup>7</sup>) were the cargo of the ships that exported pepper from Calicut to Aden and Mecca before the arrival of the Portuguese<sup>8</sup>. Safety and economy, conflicting motivations, made the Portuguese disagree about the best tonnage for their trade with India<sup>9</sup>. In 1570 a decree by D. Sebastian, king of Portugal, prescribed that the ships of the *Carreira da Índia* should have a tonnage between 300 and 450 *tonéis*<sup>10</sup>. Both before and after that date, however,

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the *naus* crossing the oceans between Portugal and India were often larger than that<sup>11</sup>. Seven hundred *tonéis* was the estimated tonnage of the *Santa Catarina do Monte Sinai*<sup>12</sup>, which in 1518 brought to Lisbon almost 470 tons of pepper and almost 18 tons of other items<sup>13</sup>. Of approximately the same size was the *Nazaré*, which in the same year carried a cargo of more than 491 tons, more than 463 of which was pepper<sup>14</sup>. In 1552, the galleon *S. João* carried 12,000 *quintais* (= 705 tons) of pepper when it wrecked near Port Edward in South Africa during its first voyage from India<sup>15</sup>. In 1590, the *Madre de Dios* carried 7,101 *quintais* (= 417 tons) of pepper; in 1594, the *Chagas* carried 9,800 *quintais* (= 575 tons)<sup>16</sup>. Contemporary texts on shipbuilding suggest that the remains of the *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires*, which in 1606 sank with its Indian cargo only a few miles off Lisbon, belonged to a ship of 600 *tonéis*<sup>17</sup>.

Returning to the Roman period, the question posed here is whether it is possible to give an example of:

1. the carrying capacity of the ‘very large ships’ mentioned in the *Periplus*; and
2. the relative proportions between the two principal items of trade carried by these ships: pepper (which is dense and heavy) and malabathron (whose leaves tend to be bulky but light).

To date, existing evidence appeared to be insufficient to address these issues. I will argue here that a closer examination of one of the key sources of historical data on Indo-Roman trade, the ‘Muziris papyrus’, makes it possible to get some fresh data.

The Papyrus Vindobonensis G 40,822<sup>18</sup>—also known as the ‘Muziris papyrus’—has on its verso (reverse) side the monetary values of a set of items. After the computation of the value of each single item, the last three lines of the almost entirely preserved second column (Col. II. ll. 27-29) provide the total for all the entries, with the specification that it represents three-quarters<sup>19</sup> of the items shipped out on a vessel named the *Hermapollon*. The tally is impressive: as Morelli now reads it, the total figure is 1,151 money talents and 5,852 drachmas<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, because of the fragmentary status of the papyrus, the data for only three cargo items are easily legible. All three are of either certain Indian origin (i.e., Gangetic nard) or likely Indian origin (i.e., ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai*<sup>21</sup>). The quantities and values are as follows:

Item	Quantity	Value
Gangetic nard	60 containers	45 talents
‘Sound’ ivory	78 talents 54¾ minae	76 talents 5,275 drachmas
<i>Schidai</i>	13 talents 9¾ minae	8 talents 5,882 drachmas 3 obols
<b>Total</b>	60 containers, 92 talents 4½ minae	130 talents 5,157 drachmas 3 obols

Taken together, the value of the three identified items amounts to 130 money talents, 5,157 drachmas and 3 obols, which constitute only about 11.36% of the entire cargo's value. This leads immediately to the question about what trade items made up the remaining 88.64% value.

Under most circumstances, any further speculation about the remaining cargo would have been fruitless, but two related lines of evidence may change that: the first is that the recto (front side) of the Muziris papyrus preserves a fragment of a loan contract for a voyage to Muziris, and the second is that the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* includes Gangetic nard and ivory among the merchandise available from the south Indian emporia of the Limyrike—one of which was Muziris<sup>22</sup>. Since the *Hermapollon*'s cargo is valued on the verso side of a loan agreement for a commercial enterprise to Muziris and includes items known to be available at Muziris, it is very likely that this cargo was entirely imported from Muziris. If so, then there can be very little doubt that at least part of the remaining unidentified cargo on the *Hermapollon* included black pepper and malabathron—a conclusion further supported by the assertion in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* that these ships were 'very big' in order to transport these two trade items.

Even if we accept that black pepper and malabathron made up the remaining value and weight of the *Hermapollon* cargo, it is still a challenge to speculate how much of each item was carried, and an even greater challenge to calculate how much each was worth. Such pertinent information would have been contained in the preceding Column I of the verso side of the papyrus, most of which is lost. What remains of Column I is meager—a few letters on its right margin, seemingly referring to weights and sums of money—and do not at first appear to be informative. However, a closer look at these signs, as shall be demonstrated below, does in fact lead to unexpected new data and insights.

### Pepper

The limited interpretive potential of the verso text was further restricted by a couple of crucial misreadings made by the first editors and so far undetected. At Col. I l. 25 they read ] μν(ῶν) (δραχμῶν) ψοα to mean 'mnai, drachmas, 771'. Such a reading is meaningless: it conjoins a unit of weight with a unit of currency in a single descriptive measure.

As a matter of fact the reading is evidently ἀργ(υρίου) (τάλαντα) ψοα, which means 'money talents, 771'. On the basis of this revised reading, one can argue that one of the unidentified cargo items listed in the fragmented Column I had a total monetary value of at least 771 talents, which would have been almost 67% of the total value of 1,151 talents and 5,852 drachmas. Such a considerable amount could have referred only to black pepper, the principal cargo item on the vessels trading between Egypt and south India in the first centuries AD. Although the figure of 771 talents does not allow us to estimate the actual

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volume of pepper carried by the *Hermapollon*, it does demonstrate that black pepper constituted no less than two-thirds of the value of the cargo of the *Hermapollon*.

Another misreading by the first editors occurs in Col. II. 26. They read ( $\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\nu\tau\omega\nu$ ) δ (δραχμῶν) λβ, to be translated as ‘4 talents 32 drachmas’. The reading is clearly ’Δχλβ, namely the number 4,632, which is likely an amount associated with the currency unit of drachmas<sup>23</sup>. While this correction has little direct impact on the overall question of cargo value, it may lead to a better understanding of this portion of the papyrus.

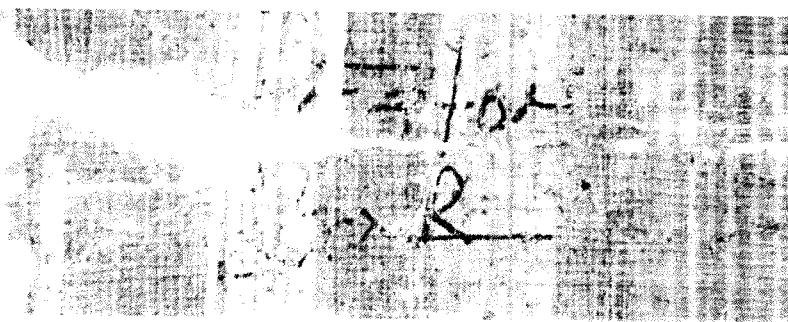


Fig. 3. P. Vindob. G 40822 verso Col. II. 25-26

The position of the amount of money mentioned at Col. II. 25—just at the end of the line—makes it very probable that the 771 talents was just the first part of a sum that included some drachmas recorded in the next line<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that the space in Col. II. 26 that precedes drachmas 4,632 was deliberately left blank in order to isolate and make more readable a single monetary figure composed of both the talents (771) in I. 25 and the drachmas (4,632) in I. 26.

In other words, one can make the argument that the monetary value of (part of) the black pepper carried by the *Hermapollon* was 771 money talents and 4,632 drachmas.

How would this sum—771 money talents, 4,632 drachmas—have been worked out by the clerk who computed the monetary values recorded on the verso of the Muziris papyrus? To answer this question, we can refer back to the calculations of value laid out in Column II for Gangetic nard, ‘sound’ ivory, and *schidai*.

For each of these items, the value was calculated by multiplying either the number of containers (for the Gangetic nard) or their recalculated<sup>25</sup> weights (for the ‘sound’ ivory and the *schidai*) by their price per unit (4,500 drachmas per container of Gangetic nard, 100 drachmas per mina of ‘sound’ ivory, 70 drachmas per mina of *schidai*).

Theoretically, black pepper could be measured either by some container unit (such as sacks) or by actual weight. Its valuation therefore could be as straightforward as that of the Gangetic nard or as complex as those of the ‘sound’ ivory and the *schidai*. It is to be noticed, however, that while the valuation of the containers of Gangetic nard takes only three lines

of the text (Col. II ll. 1-3), those of the weights of ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* require twelve (Col. II ll. 4-15) and ten (Col. II ll. 16-25) lines, respectively. Given that high numerical values are recorded at Col I ll. 20 and 21<sup>26</sup> and that Col. I ll. 22, 23 and 24 do not end with an amount of money, it is logical to suggest that the amount of money recorded at Col. I ll. 25-26 somehow relates to the high weight numbers at Col I ll. 20 and 21. This, in turn, makes it very probable that black pepper was measured by weight and that its value was calculated with a method similar to that of the ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai*.

The rather complex procedure by which the three-quarters of ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* were valued may be broken down into the following five steps:

1. Deduction of a small share of the import items, taken by the *arabarchai* (tax collectors) in addition for the *tetartologia*<sup>27</sup>.
2. Recalculation of the remaining weight of the import item, using a heavier talent (while the standard talent of the custom office of the quarter-tax weighs 95 Roman pounds, these quotas of ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* were recalculated with a talent weighing 97.5 Roman pounds).
3. Monetary valuation of the remaining weight by multiplying the weight number obtained in step 2 by the price per unit.
4. Monetary valuation of the shares ‘taken’ by the tax collectors by multiplying their non-recalculated weights by their prices per unit.
5. Sum of the monetary values obtained in step 3 and 4.

I would argue that a comparable process for the valuation of the pepper cargo can be discerned from the remains of Col. I ll. 20-28:

1. The weights recorded at ll. 20-21<sup>28</sup> may represent the quantity of pepper before (at l. 20) and after (at l. 21) the deduction of the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax (Step 1).
2. The relative clause beginning with ἐξ ὧν (‘from which’) at l. 22 likely introduces the recalculation of the weight of pepper recorded at l. 21 (Step 2).
3. The amount of money at ll. 25-26 represents the monetary valuation of the remaining weight of pepper (Step 3).
4. At l. 27, the ] μν(ῶν) μδ δ' (‘44½ minae’)<sup>29</sup> likely represents the ending of the weight number corresponding to the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax. In the missing lines below<sup>30</sup>, its monetary value was calculated (Step 4) and
5. then added to the 771 talents and 4,632 drachmas (Step 5).

If the process of the monetary valuation of the pepper was indeed analogous to that of the ivory, then it is very likely that the amount of money recorded at Col I ll. 25-26 was

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determined by taking a natural number of minae<sup>31</sup> and multiplying it by the price per unit. Since 4,630,632 drachmas (= 771 talents and 4,632 drachmas) is a multiple of 24, the price per mina must be either 24 or one of its submultiples: 12, 8, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1. The possible weights, therefore, that would result in the sum of 771 talents and 4,632 drachmas would be as follows:

Price per mina	Weight
1 drachma	77,177 talents 12 minae (= 2,366,716 kg)
2 drachmas	38,588 talents 36 minae (= 1,183,358 kg)
3 drachmas	25,725 talents 44 minae (= 788,905 kg)
4 drachmas	19,294 talents 18 minae (= 591,679 kg)
6 drachmas	12,862 talents 52 minae (= 394,452 kg)
8 drachmas	9,647 talents 9 minae (= 295,839 kg)
12 drachmas	6,431 talents 26 minae (= 197,226 kg)
24 drachmas	3,215 talents 43 minae (= 98,613 kg)

At first glance, the last option—24 drachmas per mina as price, connected to a weight of 3,215 talents 43 minae—appears to be the best fit. Indeed, 24 drachmas per mina is very close to the price of black pepper given by Pliny the Elder<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, 3,215 talents is very close to the number (3,2?5) read by the first editors at Col I l. 21. Upon further consideration, however, neither argument seems to make a strong case. Regarding the price, Pliny is probably referring to retail prices in mid-1st century AD Italy, which may be different for pepper than the wholesale prices (or, rather, fiscal valuations) in mid-2nd century AD Egypt.

Regarding the weight, if 3,215 is the figure at Col I l. 21, then we must acknowledge that the weight of the pepper was not recalculated using a heavier weight unit for talents, as were the weights of the ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai*. But such an acknowledgment makes it difficult to understand the vast gap between the weight of the pepper at Col. I l. 21 and its monetary valuation at Col. I ll. 25-26. The 771 talents and 4,632 drachmas should result from the simple multiplication of weight and price per unit: both data—weight and price per unit—must have been recorded in the lost portion of l. 25. It is highly implausible that

the same weight at l. 21 was repeated there. On the contrary, a comparison with Column II makes it much more likely that the weight at Col. I l. 21 was recalculated with a heavier standard in Col. I ll. 22-24.

An alternate reading of 3,295 talents (the only other possibility, if the reading 5 is accepted) is also incompatible with the assumption that the weight recorded at l. 21 was recalculated using a heavier talent weight, when calibrated using natural numbers of Roman pounds and ounces. If translated into Roman pounds at the ratio of 1 talent to 95 pounds, and then back again into talents at the ratio of 1 talent to 97 pounds plus a natural number of ounces, a weight of 3,295 talents and x minae cannot lead to 3,215 talents and 43 minae<sup>33</sup>. Hence, paradoxical as it seems, the digits 3,000 + 200 at Col I l. 21 do not support the hypothesis that 3,215 talents and 43 minae is the missing weight figure at Col I l. 25. What is suggested instead is the weight figure of 12,862 talents and 52 minae.

If the weight at Col. I l. 21, measured with the official talent of 95 pounds, was 1]3,200 + x talents and y minae; if it was recalculated with a heavier talent, calibrated on a talent weighing natural numbers of Roman pounds and ounces; and if the result of the recalculation was 12,862 talents and 52 minae as the missing weight number to be restored at Col. I l. 25, then the weight at Col. I l. 21 should be one of the following:

Weight before recalculation (Col. I l. 21) (at 95 lbs per talent)	Weight after recalculation (Col. I l. 25) (at ≥ 97 lbs 6 oz per talent)
13,201 t. 22 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 6 ounces per talent)
13,212 t. 12 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 7 ounces per talent)
13,223 t. 2 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 8 ounces per talent)
13,235 t. 13 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 9 ounces per talent)
13,246 t. 3 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 10 ounces per talent)
13,258 t. 14 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 97 lbs 11 ounces per talent)
13,269 t. 4 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 98 lbs per talent)
13,279 t. 54 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 98 lbs 1 ounces per talent)
13,290 t. 44 m.	12,862 t. 52 m. (at 98 lbs 2 ounces per talent)

Taking into account what does remain visible at l. 21, we can suggest the following:

1. The correct reading at l. 21 is 1]3,223 talents and 2 minae. Such a reading does not seem impossible: I take as γ the long horizontal stroke and the oblique stroke located after the supposed ε<sup>34</sup>. Between the supposed ε and what I perceive as the oblique

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stroke of the γ, I cannot see any sign—or even sufficient space—for the symbol for mina. In my opinion, the symbol for mina is after—not before—the γ. The γ, therefore, must be the last digit (3) of the number of talents. The preceding digit, situated between the hundreds (σ) and the units (γ), cannot be a 5 (ε), as read by the first editors. It must be a ten, very likely 20 (κ). Under the horizontal stroke and to the right side of the oblique stroke of the γ, I read the symbol for mina, followed by the remains of a letter compatible with β. My reading for what remains of l. 21 is thus: ] Γσκγ μι(ων) β, and the entire line should be restored as follows: [ών ὄμοιός τιμή λογίζεται ὀλκ(ῆς) μὲν (ταλάντων) μ(υριάδος) α] Γσκγ μι(ων) β.

2. The weight of 13,223 talents and 2 minae, measured with a talent of 95 pounds, was then arithmetically recalculated with a talent of 97.66 pounds (97 pounds and 8 ounces) through the simple equivalence (particularly functional for recalculating such enormous quantities of imported pepper) of 1,028 talents (of 95 pounds) = 1,000 talents (of 97.66 pounds).

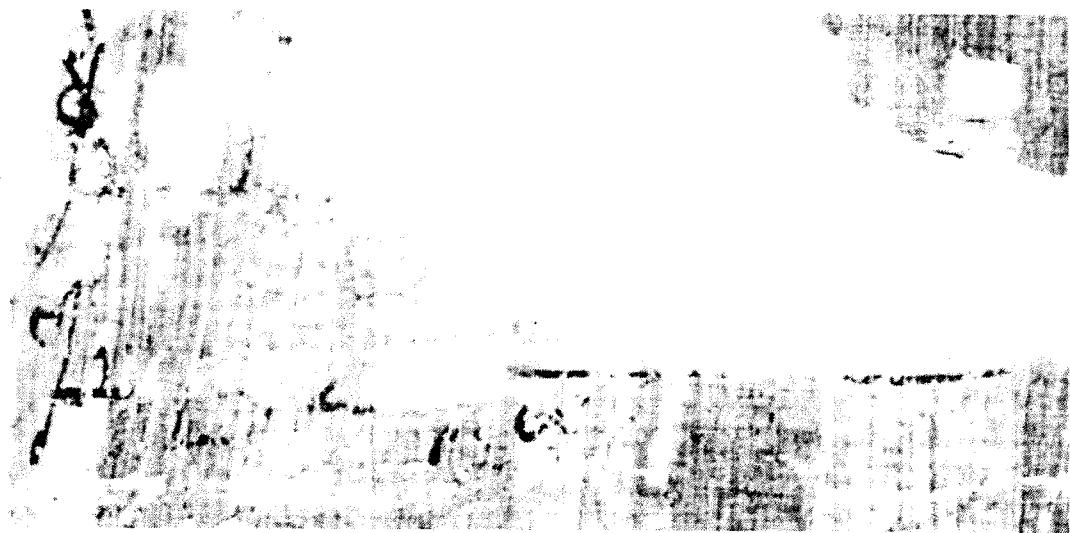


Fig. 4. P. Vindob. G 40822 verso Col. I ll. 20-21

The actual three-quarters of the *Hermapollon*'s pepper cargo was recorded at Col. I ll. 20, where Morelli reads either ] Γτη (3,308) or ] Γτιε (3,315). The first reading seems preferable: as in Col. I ll. 21, here I restore μ(υριάδος) α (10,000) before ] Γτη (3,308). The number of weight talents was therefore 1]3,308.

To infer the number of minae, we should refer to the interpretation given by Morelli of Col. I ll. 4-13, who convincingly shows the following:

- a. At Col. I ll. 4 is recorded the number of containers of Gangetic nard corresponding to the quarter-tax.
- b. At Col. I ll. 5-9 are listed:
  - 1. The entire quantity of 'sound' ivory imported by the *Hermapollon* (l. 5: here Morelli correctly reads '105' instead of the '120' read by the first editors);
  - 2. The quantities of 'sound' ivory corresponding to the sum of the quarter-tax and the share 'taken' by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax (l. 6);
  - 3. The quantity of 'sound' ivory corresponding to the share 'taken' by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax (l. 8); •
  - 4. The quantity of 'sound' ivory corresponding to the quarter-tax (l. 9).
- c. At Col. I ll. 10-13 are recorded:
  - 1. The entire quantity of *schidai* imported by the *Hermapollon* (l. 10);
  - 2. The quantity of *schidai* corresponding to the sum of the quarter-tax plus the share 'taken' by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax (l. 11: again, Morelli here correctly reads '46' instead of '26' as read by the first editors);
  - 3. The quantity of *schidai* corresponding to the quarter-tax (l. 13: Morelli rectifies as '4' what was read as '24' by the first editors).

On these premises, we can attempt an explanation of the data in Col. I ll. 1-3. It seems quite probable that the remains of the three weight numbers in Col. I ll. 1-3 (59 minae, 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  minae, 58 minae) relate to the black pepper, whose three-quarters are valued—right before the Gangetic nard—at Col. I ll. 20 ff<sup>35</sup>. As Morelli noticed, the 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  minae of Col. I l. 2 is one-quarter of 59 at Col. I l. 1; and 44 $\frac{1}{4}$  minae of Col. I l. 27 are the remaining three-quarters.

I suggest understanding Col. I ll. 1-3 as follows:

- 1. The weight of Col. I l. 1 ( $x$  talents + 59 minae) is the quantity corresponding to the sum of the quarter-tax and the share 'taken' by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax;
- 2. The weight of Col. I l. 2 ( $y$  talents + 14 $\frac{3}{4}$  minae) is the quantity corresponding to the quarter-tax;
- 3. The weight of Col. I l. 3 ( $z$  talents + 58 minae) is the quantity corresponding to a further deduction<sup>36</sup>.

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A quarter-tax ending with 14½ minae must come from a total quantity ending with 59 minae; the remaining three-quarters must be a quantity ending with 44½ minae. Recalling the 1]3,308 weight talents to be restored at Col. I l. 20, we may therefore conclude that:

1. The three-quarters of the pepper carried by the *Hermapollon* amounted to 13,308 weight talents and 44½ minae;
2. The quantity of pepper corresponding to the quarter-tax amounted to 4,436 weight talents and 14½ minae;
3. The entire quantity of black pepper carried by the *Hermapollon* was 17,744 weight talents and 59 minae.

Because the weight number of the total quantity of pepper ended with 59 minae, and because the sum of all the deductions (the quarter-tax, the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax and the further deduction) amounted to a weight number ending with 57 minae<sup>37</sup>, one can confirm that the weight number at Col. I l. 21 ends with 2 minae, giving additional support to reading the weight as talents 1]3,223 minae 2.

To sum up, the entire process of valuating the three-quarters of pepper imported by the *Hermapollon* may be reconstructed as follows:

1. From the weight specified at Col. I l. 20 (weight talents 1]3,308 [mina 44½] of pepper, which represents the three-quarters of the total quantity imported by the *Hermapollon*, two different amounts (one of which is the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax) are deducted. What remains is 13,223 weight talents and 2 minae.
2. This weight, measured with the official talent of 95 pounds, is then recalculated with a talent of 97.66 pounds. In practice, for each 1,028 official talents only 1,000 are counted. The result is the weight figure 12,862 weight talents and 52 minae.
3. The weight figure 12,862 talents and 52 minae is multiplied by 6 drachmas per mina (360 drachmas per talent). The resulting amount of money is 771 talents and 4,632 minae.
4. The quantity corresponding to the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax is multiplied by 6 drachmas per mina.
5. 771 talents and 4,632 minae is added to the result of Step 4.

### Malabathron and Tortoise Shell

Morelli’s interpretation of Col. I ll. 4-13 makes it clear that the monetary valuation of the three-quarters of the cargo of the *Hermapollon* does not begin before Col. I l. 14. As the pepper section starts with Col. I l. 20, it follows that Col. I ll. 14-19 contained the valuation

of the three-quarters of the item (or items), that, together with pepper, Gangetic nard, ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* made up the cargo of the *Hermapollon*.

Incorporating the calculations so far discussed in this essay, and assuming that the pepper ‘taken’ in addition by the tax collectors was 18 weight talents and 44 ¼ minae<sup>38</sup>, valued at 1 money talents and 745.5 drachmas, the values of the three-quarters of known and unknown items may be reconstructed as follows:

Items	Value of the three-quarters	
Pepper	772 talents	5,377.5 drachmas
Gangetic nard	45 talents	
‘Sound’ ivory	76 talents	5,275 drachmas
<i>Schidai</i>	8 talents	5,882.5 drachmas
Missing items	248 talents	1,317 drachmas
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,151 talents</b>	<b>5,852 drachmas</b>

Can we now determine how many items are missing and, in the case of multiple items, can we attempt to identify them and approximate their respective values and weights? The fractions at Col. I ll. 14, 17 and 18 make it clear that at the end of each of those lines were weight numbers ending with fractions of minae. On the other hand, the currency symbol of money talent at Col. I l. 19 shows that at the end of this line there was the monetary valuation of the item whose weight was specified at the end of Col. I l. 18.

We can eliminate the idea that lines Col. I ll. 14-19 concern just one item valued with the methods applied to the Gangetic nard or the ‘sound ivory’ and *schidai* (and, as argued here, to pepper): the three weight numbers at the end of Col. I ll. 14, 17 and 18 are inconsistent with both those *modi operandi*. In my view, the most satisfactory explanation of what remains in Col. I ll. 14-19 is that two items are valued, both measured by weight: ‘missing item a’ is valued at Col. I ll. 14-16, and ‘missing item b’ is valued at Col. I ll. 17-19. It appears that the valuation of these two items was worked out with a procedure different from either that of the Gangetic nard or that of pepper, ‘sound ivory’ and *schidai*. It diverges from the first one inasmuch as the items are measured by weight, and their weight numbers, given at Col. I ll. 14 and 17<sup>39</sup>, undergo an alteration resulting in the weight numbers given at Col. I ll. 15 and 18<sup>40</sup>. Likewise, the valuation of these two items also departs from that of pepper, ‘sound ivory’ and *schidai*, as it does not anticipate all the manipulations connected with the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax and the recalculation of weight with a heavier talent. After the alteration, the weight

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numbers are immediately multiplied by their respective prices per unit, leading to the amounts of money recorded at Col. I ll. 16 and 19.

On these premises, the remains of Col. I ll. 14-19 show that:

1. The unaltered weight number of ‘missing item a’ ends with 31.5 minae (Col. I l. 14).
2. The altered weight number of ‘missing item a’ ends with 21 minae (Col. I l. 15).
3. The monetary value of ‘missing item a’ includes a number of drachmas ending with the digit 8 (Col. I l. 16).
4. The altered weight number of ‘missing item b’ (Col. I l. 18<sup>41</sup>) is 1,860 + x weight talents and y.75 (or y.25) minae.
5. The monetary value of ‘missing item b’ (Col. I l. 19<sup>42</sup>) is 220 + z money talents and y drachmas.

From the combination of these clues we deduce that:

1. The price per mina of ‘missing item a’ was a number ending with the digit 8.
2. The monetary valuation of ‘missing item b’ included a number of drachmas ending with the digit 9.
3. The price per mina of ‘missing item b’ cannot be higher than 12.36 or lower than 11.76 drachmas<sup>43</sup>.

In turn, we may infer that:

1. The price per mina of ‘missing item b’ was 12 drachmas.
2. The monetary valuation of ‘missing item b’ was somewhere between 223 money talents 1,209 drachmas and 224 money talents 2,349 drachmas<sup>44</sup>.
3. The monetary valuation of ‘missing item a’ was neither higher than 25 money talents and 108 drachmas nor lower than 23 money talents and 4,968 drachmas.

Both its weight and value designate ‘missing item b’ as the second major item in the *Hermapollon*’s cargo. In terms of weight, its ratio with pepper is approximately 1 : 7.35<sup>45</sup> and, in terms of value, roughly 1 : 3.5. It is virtually certain that ‘missing item b’ is malabathron, one of the two most heavy and/or voluminous items usually (re-)exported from the ports of the Limyrike at the time of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*<sup>46</sup>.

‘Missing item a’ is most likely one of the additional Limyrike exports listed by the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*. Silk, pearl, translucent stones, hyacinth and tortoise shell are all mentioned in the text along with pepper, malabathron, Gangetic nard and ivory<sup>47</sup>. The combination of a weight number greater than 21 minae (roughly 10.7 kg) with a monetary value not higher than 25 money talents and 108 drachmas precludes, in my opinion,

identifying ‘missing item a’ as pearl, translucent stones or hyacinth. The circumstance of the last digit of the price per mina being 8 also makes silk an unlikely candidate, since the price of silk could have been even higher than that of ivory and a round figure would be a more likely price. The most plausible option then is tortoise shell.

In Diocletian’s edict on Maximum Prices, the price of tortoise shell (100 *denarii* per pound) is two-thirds of the price of ivory (150 *denarii* per pound)<sup>48</sup>. We may suggest that in the Muziris papyrus the price of tortoise shell was 48 drachmas per mina<sup>49</sup>. The weight mentioned at Col. I l. 15 would therefore be 51 talents and 21 minae and the monetary value recorded at Col. I l. 16 would be 24 talents and 3,888 drachmas.

Consequently, the weight of the malabathron (Col. I l. 18) would be 1,863 talents and 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  minae; its value (Col. I l. 19) would be 223 talents and 3,429 drachmas<sup>50</sup>.

### The Cargo of the *Hermapollon*

The addenda of the sum given at Col. II l. 29 (1,151 money talents and 5,852 drachmas) may now be reconstructed as follows:

Item	Price <sup>51</sup>	Value
Tortoise shell	48 drachmas per mina	24 talents 3,888 drachmas
Malabathron	12 drachmas per mina	223 talents 3,429 drachmas
Pepper	6 drachmas per mina	772 talents 5,377.5 drachmas
Gangetic nard	4,500 drachmas per container	45 talents
‘Sound’ ivory	100 drachmas per mina	76 talents 5,275 drachmas
<i>Schidai</i>	70 drachmas per mina	8 talents 5,882.5 drachmas

The valued quantities were:

Item	Quantity <sup>52</sup>
Tortoise shell	51 talents 21 minae
Malabathron	1,863 talents 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ minae
Pepper	13,241 talents 46 $\frac{1}{4}$ minae
Gangetic nard	60 containers
‘Sound’ ivory	78 talents, 54 $\frac{3}{4}$ minae
<i>Schidai</i>	13 talents, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ minae

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The weight of the entire cargo was:

Item	Quantity
Tortoise shell	68 talents and 28 minae + 4/3 of the subtracted quota besides the quarter tax <sup>53</sup>
Malabathron	2,484 talents and 8 minae + 4/3 of the subtracted quota besides the quarter-tax <sup>54</sup>
Pepper	17,744 talents and 59 minae
Gangetic nard	80 containers
‘Sound’ ivory	105 talents and 13 minae
<i>Schidai</i>	17 talents and 33 minae
Total Weight	20,420 talents 21 minae + 4/3 of the subtracted tortoise shell and malabathron + 80 containers of Gangetic nard

Some 20,500 talents of 95 Roman pounds each correspond to more than 625 tons, 544 of which (87%) was pepper<sup>55</sup>. Even if the weight of the 80 containers of Gangetic nard was relatively modest<sup>56</sup>, it is clear from this reappraisal that the weight of the rest of the cargo would be enough to qualify the *Hermapollon* as a ‘very big’ ship in the eyes of the traders of the Graeco-Roman world<sup>57</sup>.

## Notes

\* I am very much obliged to Herr Prof. B. Palme, Leiter of the Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek Wien, for all the assistance he kindly provided during my time at the Papyrussammlung. There, I discussed several problems raised by this text with Dr. Federico Morelli, who afterwards generously allowed me to read a draft of his paper. I have been glad to see that, independently of each other, we arrived at the same reading of Col. I ll. 27-28. In this work, I shall briefly refer to his convincing interpretation of verso Col. I ll. 4-13. Other aspects of his contribution will be dealt with elsewhere. Also, I should thank my colleague, Prof. M.R. Falivene, whose advice helped me greatly, as well as my students S. Bettinelli, M. Mancini, J. Montani, and M. Peloso.

1 PME 56: πλεῖ δὲ εἰς τὰ ἐμπόρια ταῦτα μέ<γι>στα πλοῖα διὰ τὸν δύκον καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ πιπέρεως καὶ τοῦ μαλαβάθρου. A translation is below, in the text. For the correction μέ<γι>στα, cfr. De Romanis 1996: 178-180, nt. 40. Because of their considerable size, the ships that sailed to Muziris (or Nelkynda) could accommodate on board ‘cohorts

of archers' (Plin., n.h. VI 101), but had to reduce as much as possible the navigation in the northern part of the Red Sea: their main port was Berenice (Plin., n.h. VI 103), the southernmost Egyptian port on the Red Sea. – In general, on Roman trade and black pepper import from India, cfr. Thapar 1992; on pepper consumption in the Roman empire, Zappata 1994; Sidebotham 2011: 224-227.

- 2 PME 60: [...] ἐν οἷς τοπικὰ μέν ἔστιν πλοῖα μέχρι Λιμυρικῆς παραλεγόμενα τὴν γῆν, ἔτερα δ' ἐκ μονοξύλων πλοίων μεγίστων ἀφαῖς (Müller : ἀφῆς cod. Giangrande, Casson) ἔζευγμένα, λεγόμενα σάνγαρα, τὰ δὲ εἰς τὴν Χρυσήν καὶ εἰς τὸν Γάγγην διειρούντα κολανδιοφωντα τὰ μέγιστα. "In these [sc. ports] there are ships which skirt the coast as far as Limyrike, others, called sangara, made of very big dugout canoes bound together by joints, and finally the ones which cross the sea towards Chryse and the Ganges, the very big kolandiophonta".
- 3 The two- or possibly three-masted sailing ship scratched on a sherd of rouletted ware found at Alagankulam, on the Tamil Nadu coast at the mouth of the Vaigai, the river that used to cross the Pandya capital Madurai, has been recognized as a Roman merchant ship by Casson 1997 and Tchernia 1998: 455-456. At Khor Rori, the ancient Moscha Limen, where ships coming back from Limyrike could stop by or winter (cfr. De Romanis 2009 : 645-653), a graffito on plaster with a two-masted sailing ship has been found: Avanzini 2008, p. 616, fig. 4. A three-masted ship in a rock-drawing near Myos Hormos: Peacock and Blue 2006 : 18; Tchernia 2011 : 85. A ship with a single mast in a graffito on a pottery sherd from Berenike : Sidebotham 2011: 202.
- 4 *Akanānānūru* 149, 9.
- 5 Philostr., v. A. III 35: ὑποκείσθω δὲ ναῦς, οἷαν Αἴγυπτιοι ξυντιθέντες ἐς τὴν θάλατταν τὴν ἡμεδαπήν ἀφιάσιν ἀγωγίμων 'Ινδικῶν ἀντιδιδόντες Αἴγυπτια, θεσμοῦ γὰρ παλαιοῦ περὶ τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν ὄντος, ὃν βασιλεὺς Ἐρύθρας ἐνόμισεν, ὅτε τῆς θαλάττης ἐκείνης ἥρχε, μακρῷ μὲν πλοίῳ μὴ ἐσπλεῦν ἐς αὐτὴν Αἴγυπτίους, στρογγύλῃ δ' αὖ μιᾷ νηὶ χρῆσθαι, σοφίζονται πλοῖον Αἴγυπτιοι πρὸς πολλὰ τῶν παρ' ἔτέροις καὶ παραπλευρώσαντες αὐτὸν ἀρμονίαις, ὅπόσαι ναῦν ξυνιστᾶσι, τοίχοις τε ὑπεράραντες καὶ ἴστῳ καὶ πηξάμενοι πλείους οἰκίας, οἵας ἐπὶ τῶν σελμάτων, πολλοὶ μὲν κυβερνῆται τῆς νεάς ταύτης ὑπὸ τῷ πρεσβυτάτῳ τε καὶ σοφωτάτῳ πλέουσι, πολλοὶ δὲ κατὰ πρῷραν ἄρχοντες ἄριστοί τε καὶ δεξιοὶ ναῦται καὶ πρὸς ἴστια πηδῶντες, ἔστι δέ τι τῆς νεάς ταύτης καὶ ὅπλιτεύον, πρὸς γὰρ τοὺς κολπίτας βαρβάρους, οἱ ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ ἐσπλούτου κεῖνται, παρατάττεσθαι δεῖ τὴν ναῦν, ὅτε ληζοιντο αὐτὴν ἐπιπλέοντες.—Of course, king Erythras is a mythical figure and his odd laws never existed. But the ships for which those stories were invented were very real.
- 6 Marco Polo, *Le divisament dou monde*, 158, 8: "E si vos di que cestes nes veulent CC marineres, mes elle sunt si grant qu'elle portent bien V<sup>M</sup> esportes de pevre, e de tel VI<sup>M</sup>"; *Il Milione*, 154, 7: "Queste navi vogliono bene .cc. marinai, ma elle sono tali che portano bene .v<sup>m</sup>. sporte di pepe, e di tali .vj<sup>m</sup>." Digby 1982 : 132; 139 suggests that the measure referred to by Marco Polo was either the Venetian *carica* (ca. 120 kg) or the Indian Ocean

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*bahâr* (ca. 235 kg). However, contemporary readers of either the Franco-Italian or the Tuscan version would have understood 5,000 or 6,000 *esportes/sporte* of some 210-225 kg each, cfr. Ashtor 1982 : 475-476.

- 7 Corresponding to 235/282 tons, Prange 2011: 219, nt. 41.
- 8 D. Barbosa, *Livro em que dá relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente*, Lisboa 1946, p. 160-161: “Estes no tempo que prosperaram nos seus tratôs e navegação, faziam nesta cidade naus de quilha de mil e mil duzentos bahares de cárrega; estas naus eram feitas sem nenhuma pregadura, todo o tabuado cosido com tamisa, e as obras de cima mui desviadas de feição das nossas, sem nenhuma coberta. – Aqui carregavam toda sorte de mercadorias para todas as partes, e partiam desta cidade cada monção dez e quinze naus destas para o mar Roxo, Adem e Meca, onde vendiam muito bem suas mercadorias, algumas aos mercadores de Judá que, daí, as levavam em pequenos navios ao Toro, e do Toro iam ao Cairo e do Cairo a Alexandria, e daí a Veneza, por onde vinham ter a nossas partes, as quais mercadorias eram muita pimenta e gengibre e canela, cardamomo, miramulanos, tamarinos, canafistula, e toda sorte de pedraria, aljófar, almíscare, âmbar, ruibarbo, lenho-aloe, muitos panos de algodões e porcelanas”. – Niccolò de Conti also (in Poggio Bracciolini, *de varietate fortunae*, IVp. 148, 555-560 Guéret-Laferté) describes Indian ships of considerable (2,000 ‘butts’) tonnage: “naues fabricant quasdam longe nostris maiores, ad duum milium uegetum, quinis ueils totridemque malis. Pars inferior trino tabularum ordine contexitur ad ferendos impetus tempestatum, quibus maximis quatuntur. Sunt autem naues distinctae cellulis ita fabrefactis, ut etiam, si qua eius portio collisa deficeret, reliqua pars integra perficiat cursum”. – Additional evidence for pre-modern ships of considerable size trading between South India and Arabia is also provided by the stone anchors of exceptional weight (1.5 tons) found at Galle (Sri Lanka), at Qalhat (Oman), and off Kursadi island (Palk strait, between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka): Souter 1998: 331-342; Vosmer 1999: 248-263; Athiyaman/Jayakumar 2004: 1261-1267.
- 9 Domingues 2004 : 247-252.
- 10 Leis, e Provisões que El Rei Dom Sebastião nosso senhor fez depois que começou a governar, printed in Lisbon, 1570, (2nd edition Coimbra, 1816), p. 68-85 [non vidi]. A *tonel* of pepper (a cask 1.54 m high and 1.027 m wide at its maximum diameter) weighs approximately 13.5 *quintais* (= 793.179 kg): Costa 1977 : 82.
- 11 For a list of ships of the *Carreira da Índia* and their estimated tonnages, see Costa 1997 : 437-440.
- 12 Costa 1997 : 82.
- 13 Bouchon 1977 : x.
- 14 Bouchon 1977 : x.
- 15 B. Gomes De Brito, *História Trágico-Marítima*, I: “E partio tão tarde por ir carregar a Coulão, e lá haver pouca pimenta, onde carregou obra de quatro mil e quinhentas, e veio a Còchim acabar de carregar a copia de sete mil e quinhentas por toda com muito trabalho por causa da guerra que havia no Malavar”.

- 16 Kellenbenz 1956 : 3-4.
- 17 Castro 2005 : 147-188.
- 18 Pictures both of recto and verso are available online (open access) at the website of the Papyrussammlung of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: [http://aleph.onb.ac.at/F/?func=find-c&ccl\\_term=WID%3DRZ00001642&local\\_base=ONB08](http://aleph.onb.ac.at/F/?func=find-c&ccl_term=WID%3DRZ00001642&local_base=ONB08). At the time of the first edition, a fragment pertaining to verso Col. I l. 17-20 had been positioned upside down, with obvious consequences. A transcription is also available at <http://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb;18;13167>. Palaeography suggests a mid-2nd century AD chronology. First edition by Harrauer/ Sijpenseijn 1985. Afterwards, Thür 1987; Casson 1990; SB XVIII 13167 (Rupprecht 1993). Some new readings in the text of the verso: De Romanis 1998; Rathbone 2000. A much better edition of the verso is now offered by Morelli 2011. My translation of the text (at the end of the paper) incorporates the new readings I propose here (Col. I ll. 14; 18 and 21) and others proposed by De Romanis 1998, Rathbone 2000, and Morelli 2011. —This paper concerns only the text on the verso side. When reference to columns and lines is made, one must understand they refer only to columns and lines of P. Vindob. G 40,822 verso. I shall continue to label as ‘Column I’ and ‘Column II’ the two (partially) extant columns of the verso side. However, we shall see (cfr. nt. 35) that to the left of Column I there was one more column, which was the real Column I. Moreover, in reproducing or translating the text of the papyrus, I print with underlined characters the words or letters of uncertain reading. Square brackets mean the beginning (]) or the end (]) of lost or illegible text: words or letters that follow or precede are restored. Round brackets () include expansions of abbreviations.
- 19 Rathbone 2000 rectified the crucial reading at Col. II l. 27 ( $\bar{\gamma}$  ‘3’, rather than  $\bar{\zeta}$  ‘6’ of the previous editors) and showed that the sum given at Col. II l. 29 concerns only three-quarters of the cargo. His explanation of the deduction of one-quarter is that the quarter-tax was paid in kind. Van Minnen 2008: 237 maintains that, despite the appearances, the quarter-tax was actually paid in money and suggests that another document recorded the money transfer to the custom officers. I shall return to this question in a forthcoming paper.
- 20 Previous editors read 1,154 talents 2,852 drachmas. —The Greek word *talanton* (talent) may refer either to a currency unit (*argyriou talanton*) or to a weight unit (*holkes talanton*). As a money accounting unit, it notionally equaled 60 Roman gold coins (*aurei*) and comprised 6,000 drachmas. A drachma notionally equaled one Roman *sestertius* and comprised 6 obols. As a weight unit, a talent comprised 60 minae. Its real weight varied according to the different standards used in I-II cent. AD Egypt. At the time of the papyrus, the official talent of the custom office of the quarter-tax equaled 95 Roman lbs (=322.8 g). So a talent weighed around 30.666 kg.
- 21 As Rathbone 2000 : 45 realized (and Morelli 2011 : 221-222 confirms), the *schidai* must refer to ivory of a lower quality, broken or spoiled.
- 22 PME 56: φέρεται δὲ πέπερι μονογενῶς ἐν ἐνὶ τόπῳ τούτων τῶν ἐμπορίων (Müller: τούτῳ τῷ ἐμπορίῳ cod.) γεννώμενον πολὺ, λεγομένη Κοττοναρική (Müller: λεγομένη Κοττοναρική cod.). φέρεται δὲ καὶ μαργαρίτης ἴκανὸς καὶ διάφορος καὶ ἐλέφας

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καὶ ὁθόνια Σηρικὰ καὶ νάρδος ἡ Γαγγιτικὴ (Stuck : Ἀπανικὴ cod.) καὶ μαλάβαθρον ἐκ τῶν ἔσω τόπων εἰς αὐτὴν, καὶ λιθία διαφανῆς παντοία καὶ ἀδάμας καὶ υάκινθος καὶ χελώνη ἥ τε Χρυσονητιωτικὴ καὶ ἡ περὶ τὰς νήσους θηρευομένη τὰς προκειμένας αὐτῆς τῆς Λιμυρικῆς. “They export pepper, abundantly grown in only one region of these markets, a district called Kottonarike. They also export a sufficient quantity of pearls of excellent quality, ivory, Chinese cloth, Gangetic nard, malabathrum from the places in the interior, transparent stones of all kinds, diamonds, sapphires and tortoise-shell, both from Chryse Island and that taken from among the islands along the coast of Limyrike”. Aside from the Limyrike emporia, the author of the *Periplus* also notes (PME 63) the availability of Gangetic nard at the Ganges emporium (which is hardly surprising), but from nowhere else in India.

- 23 On the left of ’Δχλβ ‘4,632’ there are slight traces of ink, which could be the remnants of the sign for that accounting unit.
24. If pepper was valued at a high denominator fraction of talent per unit (exactly as ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* were: 1/60 and 7/600 of talent per mina, respectively), a sum of talents with no drachmas attached would be a remarkable coincidence. Absence of drachmas is less surprising, when the item is valued at a low denominator fraction of talent per unit. This is the case of the Gangetic nard, whose price per container (*kiste*) was three-quarters of a talent: the value of 60 containers was only 45 talents (Col. II ll. 1-3).
- 25 See below.
- 26 For their reading, see below.
- 27 Rathbone 2000: 46 explains the shares ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on top of the quarter-tax with the difficulty of levying a quarter-tax in kind on items such as ivory, which are not easily divisible into shares of weight that are arithmetically predetermined: the ‘remaining tusks’ and the ‘remaining *schidai*’ would be the extra weight taken in excess by the tax collectors. Moreover, he suggests that the double conversion of (part of) the three-quarters of the weights of ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai*—from talents to pounds at a *ratio* 1 : 95 and back from pounds to talents at a *ratio* 97.5 : 1—is an accounting artifice allowing the tax collectors to collect more than the stipulated 25%. However, if the shares ‘taken’ in addition by the tax collectors for the *tetartologia* depended on the rounding up of the quarter-tax, we would expect them to be recorded at the end of the process that determined the weight supposedly left to the merchants. The assumption that those shares depended on a rounding up is not consistent with the hypothesis that the subsequent double conversion of the weights aims at a further reduction—arithmetically determined—of the amounts which, in Rathbone’s interpretation, would be given back to the merchants. Either the first or the second contention (or, more probably, both) must be wrong. In my opinion, the shares ‘taken’ by the tax collectors define a surcharge and the double conversion of the weights aims at adjusting the monetary value of the items. For their assessment see below nt. 38. I shall discuss this and other related questions in a forthcoming paper.

28 For their readings see below.

29 Morelli suggests as possible alternatives μβ δ ‘42  $\frac{1}{4}$ ’ or μα δ ‘41  $\frac{1}{4}$ ’.

- 30 I assume that below Col. I l. 28 at least two lines are lost. Below Col. II l. 29 (maybe the last line of the text) there are at least 5 cm of blank space.
- 31 The shares of ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai* ‘taken’ by the tax collectors include the fractions of mina of the original amounts of the three-quarters (see below nt. 38). Therefore, the remaining quantities end with natural numbers of minae. We shall argue that the share of pepper ‘taken’ by the tax collectors include the fraction of talent of the original amount of the three-quarters. A further reduction of  $x$  talents and 58 minae leaves an amount ending with a natural number of minae.
- 32 Plin., n.h. XII 28: emitur in libras (denariis) XV, album (denariis) VII, nigrum (denariis) III. “it [i.e. long pepper] is bought for 15 *denarii* per pound; white pepper for 7, black pepper for 4”. Four *denarii* per pound notionally correspond to 25.33 drachmas per mina.
- 33 The closest we can get is either 3,214 talents and 26 minae obtained from 3,295 talents and 59 minae, recalculated with a talent of 97 pounds and 5 ounces, or 3,216 talents and 7 minae obtained from 3,295 talents, recalculated with a talent of 97 pounds and 4 ounces. Nor can an adjustment from 3,295 and  $x$  minae to 3,215 talents and 43 minae be explained by a recalculation with a weight unit whose difference from the official talent was measured in simple fractions of mina (such a procedure occurs in POxy 2,580): the lighter talent would be between 58.53 and 58.55 minae of the heavier; the heavier would be between 61.47 and 61.49 of the lighter.
- 34 Of course, the  $\gamma$  is a little more spaced from the  $\kappa$  and its horizontal stroke extends longer than the usual pattern. I surmise that the clerk, thinking he had to write only weight talents 13,223, filled the blank space up to the end of the line with a long stroke, exactly as he does with the  $v$  at Col. II l. 28. Subsequently, having realized that 2 minae had to be added, he wrote  $\mu\nu(\delta\nu)$   $\beta$  under the horizontal stroke of the  $\gamma$ .
- 35 As Col. I began with what we label as l. 1 and the document could not fail to mention the entire quantity of the pepper imported and the data related to the items evaluated in Col. I ll. 14-19, it necessarily follows that another entire column precedes Column I: therefore, the so-called ‘Column I’ is actually ‘Column II’ and the so-called ‘Column II’ is actually ‘Column III’. This conclusion has serious implications for the general understanding of the text, which I shall address in a forthcoming paper.
- 36 We shall see below that the weights of the three-quarters of two other items of the cargo undergo a reduction that is not imputable to the share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors on the top of the quarter-tax.
- 37  $14\frac{1}{4} + 44\frac{1}{4} + 58 = 1$  weight talent and 57 minae.
- 38 The shares ‘taken’ by the tax collectors derive from round proportions of the rounded up amounts: 1 mina per 10 talents ( $\epsilon\zeta\alpha\kappa\sigma\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}$ , 1/600) of ‘sound’ ivory (a total amount of 105 talents 13 minae, rounded up to 110 talents, makes 11 minae); 120 drachmae per 1 talent ( $\pi\epsilon\nu\tau\eta\kappa\sigma\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}$ , 1/50) of *schidai* (a total amount of 17 talents 33 minae, rounded up to 18 talents, makes 21.6 minae, rounded up to 22 minae);  $x$  talents per 1,000 talents of pepper (a total amount of 17,744 talents 59 minae, rounded up to 18,000 talents, makes

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- 18  $\times$  talents). To these quantities the fractions of mina (for ‘sound’ ivory and *schidai*) or talent (for pepper) of the three-quarters of the total amounts were added. Consequently, we get 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  minae of ‘sound’ ivory, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  of *schidai*, 18  $\times$  talents 44 $\frac{1}{4}$  minae of pepper.— In my reconstruction of the values of the three-quarters of the cargo, I assume that the tax collectors ‘took’ 1/1,000 ( $\chi\lambda\iota\omega\sigma\tau\eta$ ) of the rounded up amount plus the fraction of talent of the total amount (44 $\frac{1}{4}$  minae). Of course, a different rate cannot be excluded, but it would imply only slight adjustments in the values of the pepper and the missing items.
- 39 At Col. I l. 14, I read  $\lambda\alpha$  L' ‘31½’; the first editors had read  $\delta\lambda(\kappa\eta\varsigma)$  a L' ‘weight 1½’; Morelli reads  $\mu\alpha$  L' ‘41½’. At Col. I l. 17 I read ] δ' ‘]¼’; Morelli reads κγ δ' ‘23¼’. The readings proposed by me are all compatible with the hypothesis that those weight numbers represents three-quarters of original quantities comprising only natural numbers of minae.
- 40 At Col. I 15 I accept Morelli’s reading κα ‘21’. The first editors read σα.
- 41 At Col. I l. 18, I read ’Αωξ[ (‘186[?’), Morelli’s reading is ’Ασ[ (‘1,2[?’). At the end of the line, I would read L' δ' ‘½ ¼’, Morelli reads .δ. ’.
- 42 At Col. I l. 19 Morelli reads ἀργ(υρίου)(τάλαντα) σκ[ (‘22[?’), but κ seems to me more clear than σ.
- 43 The higher limit is obtained by assuming that 229 money talents and 5,999 drachmas (the highest possible monetary value) was the value of 1,860 weight talents and one-quarter of mina (the lowest possible weight number); the lower limit supposes that 220 money talents and 9 drachmas (lowest possible monetary value) were the value of 1,869 weight talents and 59  $\frac{3}{4}$  minae (the highest possible weight number).
- 44 The first sum results from a quantity of 1,860 weight talents and three-quarters of a mina, the second from 1,869 weight talents and 55  $\frac{3}{4}$  minae.
- 45 But the ratio between their volumes must have been much less uneven.
- 46 Cfr. *supra* nt. 1.—Greek *malabathron* comes from Sanskrit *tamālapattra*, ‘leaf of *tamāla*’. Just like the Gangetic nard, the malabathron was imported to Limyrike from the Ganges emporion: PME 63. Pliny the Elder (Plin., n.h. XII 129), who fixes the price of black pepper at 4 *denarii* per pound (cfr. *supra*, nt. 32), states that the price of the malabathron may fluctuate between 1 and 300 *denarii* per pound, adding however that 60 *denarii* per pound is the price of the leaves themselves. At POxy 3,731 pepper and malabathron are both valued at 1 talent per pound. POxy 3,733 gives the pepper at 1 talent per pound and the malabathron at 2 talents per pound. In POxy 3,766 the pepper is 12 talents and the malabathron 50. It is worth noting that these data may provide additional reasons not to take 24 drachmas per mina (cfr. *supra*) as the price for pepper in the verso of the Muziris papyrus. While other documents show an equal or higher price for malabathron, it would be difficult to explain why black pepper should be worth double according to the Muziris papyrus. Moreover, the malabathron issue confirms the idea that Pliny is referring to prices that are higher than those assumed in the papyrus.
- 47 Cfr. *supra* nt. 22.

- 48 Edict. de pretiis: 16, 10-11. However, it is to be noticed that while in the Muziris papyrus black pepper is valued much less (6 drachmas per mina) than both ‘sound’ ivory (100 drachmas per mina) and *schidai* (70 drachmas per mina), its maximum price in the Diocletian edict (34, 68) is much higher (800 *denarii* per pound) than that of the ivory.
- 49 That is, 48% of the value of the ‘sound’ ivory and 68.5% of the value of the *schidai*. Alternatively, a value of 78 drachmas per mina (78% of the value of the ‘sound’ ivory, 111.4% of the value of the *schidai*) could be also considered.
- 50 If tortoise shell was valued at a price of 78 drachmas per mina, its weight would be 31 talents and 21 minae; its value 24 talents and 2,718 drachmas. Consequently, the value of the malabathron would be 223 talents and 4,599 drachmas; its weight 1,864 talents and 43 ¼ minae.
- 51 Apparently, ‘prices’ are conventional and do not reflect market dynamics.
- 52 According to the quarter-tax official weight talent of 95 pounds. Quantities of pepper, sound ivory and *schidai* were re-calculated as 12,881 weight talents and 36 ¼ minae, 76 talents and 52 ¾ minae and 12 weight talents and 49 ¾ minae, respectively.
- 53 This is the difference between the weight numbers given at Col. II ll. 14 and 15.
- 54 This is the difference between the weight numbers given at Col. II ll. 17 and 18.
- 55 As the specific weight of pepper is 500/550 g per liter, 544 tons of pepper occupied approximately 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>. — Average percentages of pepper in the cargoes of some Portuguese ships returning from India in the 16th and early 17th centuries are given by Steensgaard 1985 : 22. In the period from 1513 to 1519 pepper was the 80% of the ships’ cargo in weight; from 1523 to 1531, 84%; from 1547 to 1548, 89%; from 1587 to 1588, 68%; from 1600 to 1603, 65%; from 1608 to 1610, 69%.
- 56 The weight of the 80 containers (*kistai*) of Gangetic nard cannot be exactly established. However, since the containers must have been portable, the total final weight would have been rather inconsequential—one or two tons at most.
- 57 Pomey/Tchernia 1978; Tchernia 2011.

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P. Vindob. G 40822 verso: A Translation\*

<b>Col. I (II, actually)</b>	<b>Pepper:</b> quarter-tax + additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors(1); quarter-tax alone(2); further deduction(3).
1. [—] 59 mn. 2. [—] 14½ mn. 3. [—] 58 mn.	
4. [—] 20	<b>Gangetic nard:</b> quarter-tax.
5. [—] 167, 105 w. tal. 13 mn. 6. [—] 26 [w.] tal. 30 mn. 7. [—] of the quarter-tax 8. [—] likewise 11¾ w. mn. 9. [—] 26 [w.] tal. 18¼ mn.	‘Sound’ ivory: number of tusks and their weight (5); quarter-tax+additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors (6); additional share taken by the tax collectors alone (8); quarter-tax alone (9).
10. [—] 17 [w.] tal. 33 mn. 11. [—] 4 [w.] tal. <u>46</u> mn. 12. [—] ... 13. [—] 4 [w.] tal. 23¼ [mn.]	<b>Schidai:</b> weight (10); quarter tax + additional share taken by the tax collectors(11); quarter-tax alone (13).
14. [Of Tortoise shell —] 31½ [mn.] 15. [—] 21 [mn.] 16. [—] 8 [dr.]	<b>Three-quarters of the tortoise shell</b> weight (14); weight altered (15); monetary value (16).
17. [Of Malabathron —] ¼ [mn.] 18. [—] 1,86[?] [w. tal.], <u>½</u> ¼ [mn.] 19. [—] 22[?] m. tal. [??9 dr.]	<b>Three-quarters of the malabathron:</b> weight (17); weight altered (18); monetary value (19).
20. [Of Pepper, 1] 3,308 [w.tal. 44¼ mn.] 21. [— 1] 3,223 [w.tal.] <u>2</u> mn. 22. [—] from which ... 23. [—] ... 24. [—] ... 25. [—] 771 m.tal. 26. [—] 4,632 [dr.] 27. [—] 44 ¼ mn. 28. [—]	<b>Three-quarters of the pepper:</b> weight (20); weight minus the additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors and the further deduction (21); recalculation into a higher weight standard (22-24); monetary value (25-26); monetary value of the additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors and total monetary value (27 ff.).

\* In the text of P. Vindob. G 40,822 verso, weight and money units are often abbreviated. To reproduce the abbreviated form I used w. tal.= weight talent(s); mn.= mina(e); w. mn.= weight minae; lbs.=pounds; m. tal.=money talent(s); dr.=drachma(s); m. dr.=money drachmas; ob.=obols. Sometimes, the clerk drops the specification of the nature of the talent (Col.II ll. 7,8,10,15,25). In those cases, however, the context makes it clear if it is a weight or a money talent. Unavoidably, the order of the words in my English translation doesn’t strictly follow that of the Greek ones in the original text. Consequently, words and lacunae are sometimes shifted.

Playing Sudoku on the Verso of the ‘Muziris Papyrus’

Col. II (III, actually)

<p>1. Of <b>Gangetic nard</b>, 60 containers, of which likewise 2. the value is reckoned per container at 4,500 dr.: 3. 45 m.tal.</p>	<p><b>Three-quarters of the Gangetic nard:</b> number of containers(1); price(2); value(3).</p>
<p>4. Of ‘sound’ ivory, 78 w.tal. 54 <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> mn., 5. of which likewise the price is reckoned thus: a) Of the 78 w.tal. 4[3] mn. 6. which—since, for the weight standard of the quarter tax, 7. the talent is reckoned at 95 lbs.—are 7,478 lbs.; 8. from which, being likewise reckoned pounds to talent 9. as it is usually reckoned for the merchants, is derived 10. 76 w. tal. 41 mn. At 100 dr. per mn.: 76 tal. 4,100 dr. 11. b) Of the remaining [—] tusks, taken in addition by the <i>arabarchai</i> for 12. the <i>tetartologia</i>, in the sum of tusks 13. together with the result, 11 <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> [<math>\frac{1}{4}</math>] mn. 14. At the same 100 dr. per mn.: dr. 1,175. 15. Makes the total 76 tal. 5,275 dr.</p>	<p><b>Three-quarters of the ‘sound’ ivory:</b> weight (4); weight minus the additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors (5); recalculation into a higher weight standard (6-10); monetary value (10);  monetary value of the additional share ‘taken’ by the tax collectors (11-14); and total monetary value (15).</p>
<p>16. Of <b>schidai</b>, 13 w.tal. 9 <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> mn., 17. of which likewise the value is reckoned thus: a) Of the 12 w. tal. 4[7] mn., 18. which, as above, [—] for the weight standard of the quarter-tax, are 19. 1,214 lbs., in the way they are reckoned for the merchants, 20. 12 w. tal. 27 mn. At 70 dr. per mn.: 21. 8 m. tal. 4,290 dr. 22. b) The remaining <i>schidai</i>, taken in addition for the <i>tetartologia</i>, 23. as above, 22 <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> mn. At the 24. same 70 dr. per mn.: 1,592 m. dr. 3 ob. 25. Total for <i>schidai</i>: 8 tal. 5,882 dr. 3 ob</p>	<p><b>Three-quarters of the <i>schidai</i>:</b> weight (16); weight minus the additional share ‘taken’ by the <i>arabarchs</i> (17); recalculation into a higher weight standard (18-20); monetary value (21);  monetary value of the additional share ‘taken’ by the <i>arabarchs</i> (22-24); and total monetary value (25).</p>
<p>26. Total for the value of ivory: [85 m.tal. 5,157 dr. 3 ob.].</p>	<p><b>Total value of the three-quarters of the ivory (‘Sound’ ivory + <i>schidai</i>) (26).</b></p>
<p>27. In sum: Of the value of the 3 (sc. out of four) parts of the cargo 28. shipped out on the vessel <i>Hermapollon</i>: 29. 1,151 m.tal. 5,852 dr.</p>	<p><b>Total value of the three-quarters of the cargo of the <i>Hermapollon</i></b></p>

Playing Sudoku on the Verso of the 'Muziris Papyrus'

Weights and Money Units in P. Vindob. G 40,822 verso

Weights

Quarter-tax official weight talent (= 95 Roman lbs)  = 30.666 kg	Mina (1/60 of a talent)  = .5111 kg	Roman Pound 322.8 g (Duncan-Jones 1994 : 213-215)
Ivory recalculation weight talent (= 97.5 Roman lbs)  = 31.473 kg	Mina (1/60 of a talent)  = .52455 kg	Roman ounce (1/12 of pound) 26.916 g
Pepper recalculation weight talent (= 97.66 Roman lbs)  = 31.524 kg	Mina (1/60 of a talent)  = .52541 kg	

Money

Money Talent = 1,500 Egyptian tetradrachms 6,000 Egyptian drachmas Notionally equivalent to: 60 Roman golden <i>aurei</i> 1,500 silver <i>denarii</i> 6,000 bronze <i>sestertii</i>	Drachma = ¼ of Egyptian tetradrachm Notionally equivalent to: 1/100 of Roman golden <i>aureus</i> 1/4 of Roman silver <i>denarius</i> 1 bronze <i>sestertius</i>	Obol = 1/6 of Egyptian drachma
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## Reflections on Food Ethics in the *Jātakas*

NAYANA SHARMA MUKHERJEE

A student of history desirous of understanding how men and women in early India lived, would take recourse to such popular literature as would be reflective of the everyday experiences of the people. Perhaps no other ancient text possibly weaves a more vivid tapestry of people's lives and thoughts other than the *Jātakas*, one of our oldest compendia of folk tales and fables. The vastness of its social canvas makes it particularly invaluable, as the Bodhisatta in the course of his several lives, takes birth in families varying from the royalty and the priestly to that of the labouring poor and even the untouchable. The significance of these texts was recognised several decades ago, "... the collection of legends is of more importance as a reservoir of materials for culture-history" (Fick 1920: viii). Preaching of *sila* or ethics is the primary objective of the narratives and food occupies an important place in Buddhist ethics. On the one hand, food is essential as nutriment to sustain health; on the other, dietary habits and ethics are indicators of cultural differences. What one eats or does not is the outcome of belonging to a particular social or cultural group. In this respect food imparts cultural identity, and serves as a stepping stone for investigating a wider culture. Different groups of people sharing the same food assemblage make conscious dietary choices and adopt certain dietary customs and prejudices. Such choices serve as markers of social distinctiveness.

### Alms-Seekers and Alms-Givers:

As the ascetic ideal is upheld as the noblest in the *Jātaka* stories, most references to food occur in the context of almsgiving. Renouncers, being completely disassociated with food production, were dependent on begging or gleaning from the forest. The gift of food and drink is highly praised and it was the usual practice to give alms to brāhmaṇas and mendicants who came begging to the door step. It is said that a householder should not eat dainty food alone, rather continually provide monks and brāhmaṇas with food and drink (*Jātaka* VI: 139).

Developing conviction among the laity to part with a share of their resources was a major concern for the survival of a community of alms-seekers. Many of the *Jātaka* stories revolve around the issues of miserliness and greed. The *Bilāri-Kosiya-Jātaka* relates the story of an affluent merchant who was so parsimonious that he burnt down his ancestral almonry and beat up the beggars. The Bodhisatta taught that to deny alms to anyone was unrighteous and even when there was nothing to offer, the virtuous should make the effort to procure it and never refuse. The merchant was gradually converted to the virtues of charity and his good deeds later ensured him a place in heaven (*ibid.* IV: 40-44).

The *Sasa-Jātaka* exhorts the benefactor to give selflessly and without any thought of reciprocity. The Bodhisatta, once born as a hare, had nothing to offer by way of suitable food to a brāhmaṇa. So he resolved to sacrifice himself so that the alms-seeker would not return empty handed (*ibid.* III: 37). No distinction is made in the *Jātaka* narratives between the various denominations of alms seekers, whether brāhmaṇas, ascetics or beggars. The frequent occurrence of samāṇa and brāhmaṇa together shows that the homeless ascetic and the Brāhmaṇa were for the Buddhist identical, just as for him the attributes of a homeless ascetic, propertylessness and desirelessness, are inherent in the notion of a “true” Brāhmaṇa (Fick: 191-2). Kings were given homilies by the Great Being on liberality (*Jātaka* IV:249). Rich people and kings built alms-houses (*dānasālā*) where food and drink (*annapānām*) were provided to the samāṇa-brāhmaṇas, the poor (*daliddā*), the way-farers (*vanibbakā*) and the beggars (*yācanakās*) (Mehta 1939: 352).

Several inspirational stories accentuate the never failing bountiful recompense of charity, one of the greatest human virtues. The Bodhisatta says: “By charity thou mayst ascend the noble path divine” (*Jātaka* V: 207). Mallika, the daughter of the chief of the garland-makers of Sāvatthi, gave three portions of gruel she was carrying in her basket to the Buddha. The same day she became the chief queen of Kosala, and thus, attained prosperity and high social status (*ibid.* III: 244-5). The Bodhisatta, as a poor wage earner, had once given as alms four portions of gruel to four pacceka-buddhas. Consequently in his next birth he was born as prince Brahmadatta of Benaras. He recollected the meritorious deed of his previous birth which had brought him such glory and splendour (*ibid.* III: 245-6). His chief queen had been once a handmaid’s slave but she too attained to royalty owing to the alms of rice she had given to a monk (*ibid.* III: 248).

Well-to-do disciples like Anāthapiṇḍika, Visākhā and the king of Kosala, provided an unending supply of food for a large number of bhikkhus. Visākhā sought permission from the Buddha to serve the bhikkhus in the following ways: the right to give them cloaks in the rainy season, food to all who come as guests, food to travelling priests, food and medicine to the sick and food for those who care for the sick, a continuous distribution of rice gruel and bathing robes for the sisters (*ibid.* IV: 198). The *Kesāva-Jātaka* narrates that five hundred bhikkus were constantly fed in the house of Anāthapiṇḍika at Jetavana. The king having witnessed the same was inspired to make perpetual arrangements for perpetual alms to the assembly (*ibid.* III: 94). Sometimes the invitation was extended seven days in a row when rich gifts were offered to the guests as well (*ibid.* III: 35, IV: 9). It was not enough to make arrangements for alms: the manner of offering meals was no less important. From the *Kesāva-Jātaka* again we learn, that though the brethren were served various delicacies at the royal palace, they preferred not to eat there for they were not served with love and affection. Rather they took their share of delicacies and brought them to the house of Anāthapiṇḍika, or Visākhā or any of their trusted friends where they were more comfortable (*ibid.* III: 94).

The lay followers were keen to offer hospitality to the most honoured of the bhikkus at their own homes, and where it was not possible, there is reference to the practice of sending food and money to a household where they were entertained. The venerable Sāriputta once accepted the invitation of a poor old woman at Sāvatthi. When this came to be known, king Pasendi, Anāthapiṇḍika (the elder and the younger), Visākha and several other families sent food, handsome sums of money and robes to help her entertain the bhikkhu (*ibid.* II: 200). Where a single family could not afford to extend hospitality to the entire Brotherhood of a town, a few families or the residents of a street would come together to entertain them. Sometimes the entire town would pool their resources together (*ibid.* I: 252). No offering, however frugal, ought not to be disdained; the Master himself set an example by accepting a poor man's bran cake, when he had a choice of other dainties. The man, who made his living as a hired labourer, could not afford rice gruel. He instead prepared a cake with the red powder from rice husk, which the Buddha ate as though it were ambrosia (*ibid.* I: 252-3).

An inmate of the Order had to obtain food by begging every day and hoarding was disallowed. Exception was made only for medicines, which the Buddha ordained, could be stored for seven days (*ibid.* III: 221). But hoarding was by no means unknown among the bhikkus, as some looked for ways to avoid the daily round of begging. Even in the time Buddha it is said that some monks indulged in various unprincipled methods to obtain sustenance, such as by giving medical advice, running errands, etc. The practice of exchanging alms was prevalent too, whereby a bhikku gave a share of his alms to a fellow bhikku in exchange for a share the next day. These methods met with strong disapproval from the Buddha who likened the food to poison and to the leftovers of one belonging to the lowest caste, which deprives one of joy and laughter (*ibid.* II: 57).

There is the story of a squire of Sāvatthi who decided to join the Order. But before doing so, he built a separate chamber with a kitchen and store-room for himself on the outskirts of the monastery. Moreover, he stocked the store-room with ghi, rice and other eatables. Even as a member of the Order, he sent for his servants to prepare food according to his fancy (*ibid.* I: 23). At the monastery built by king Ajātasattu for Devadatta, he and his followers were supplied with perfumed three-year-old rice along with choicest flavourings. The Buddha strongly condemned these practices too as unrighteous (*ibid.* I: 67).

The lay followers brought food and other items as gifts to the monastery, and disputes often arose over their distribution. It was the accepted practice that distribution of food in the monastery followed the rule whereby the seniors received the best quality rice, the best water and the best lodging. This rule was ordained when once the venerable Elder Sāriputta was forced to spend the night under a tree, as no place could be found for him in a newly built monastery. The Buddha then laid down that in the Order he had established, precedence in matters of food and lodging would be decided not by birth into noble or

brāhmaṇa family, nor by material possession before admission into the monastery; rather seniority would receive precedence and command respect of word and deed (*ibid.* I: 93).

### **The Forest-Dwellers:**

There are several references to householders who shunned the material world, took up abode in the Himalayas, and usually lived on the wild fruits and roots. When Rama-paṇḍita came to the Himalayas with his siblings, Lakkhaṇa and Sītā, he built a hermitage in a well-watered spot where wild fruits were easily available (*ibid.* IV:79). But during the rains, when it became difficult to dig up bulbs and roots and procure fruits and leaves, it was the usual practice for the forest dwelling ascetics to come down from the hills and make their habitation in villages or towns (*ibid.* III: 25), where they received alms.

Some ascetics took the vow of living off uncooked food. Brāhmaṇa Kanha-Kumāra made his abode at the foot of a gourd tree within the forest eating raw food with only his teeth to grind it. He never used a pestle and consumed one meal a day. He lived off the fruits, the flowers or the leaves of the tree according to the season, and when there were none, he survived on the bark. From the place where he sat, he stretched his hand and gathered what he could in his hand sweep and had no craving for tastier fruits of other trees (*ibid.* IV: 5-6). The Bodhisatta, in the *Akitta-Jātaka*, came to Kāradīpa and built his hermitage beside a great *kāra* (*Canthium parviflorum*) tree. His dietary needs were met by a very spartan meal of *kāra* leaves sprinkled with water without salt or spices. There were days when he gave away his meagre meal to beggars which left nothing for himself but his deed gave him profound joy (IV: 150). At the hermitage of the five hundred sages, king PaĀcāla was offered three kinds of leaves: *tinduk* (*Diospyros embryopteris*), *piyal* (*Buchanania latifolia*) and sweet *kāsumārī* (*ibid.* IV: 270).

However, the dietary practices of forest-dwelling recluses could be widely divergent. While some survived off vegetable and fruit diet, there were those who consumed meat and cooked their food as well. In the *Bhikkhā-Parampara-Jātaka*, an ascetic describes his diet as consisting of wild bulbs, radishes, wild rice, catmint and other herbs, black mustard, jujubes, honey, lotus-threads, myrobalan and scraps of meat. In the same story, it is said that a Pacceka Buddha is superior to the ascetic for he had neither any wealth nor he did cook his food; while the ascetic survived off cooked food and had possessions in the form of the food items he gathered (*ibid.* IV:234). But we also have instances where a wandering mendicant visited the royal palace and partook of the dainty fare served by the king (*ibid.* V: 117). The same ascetic had monkey flesh given by a villager in a frontier area (*ibid.* V: 121). Some ascetics drew sustenance from the leavings of carnivorous animals of which we have references in the brahmanical law books as well. The practitioners of this method described themselves as ‘eaters of remnants left from charity’. But carrion eaters not meet with approval from the Bodhisatta, who labelled them ‘eaters of refuse’ (*ibid.* III: 194). In the

*Taccha-Sūkara-Jātaka*, we hear of a sham ascetic who consumed meat brought by a tiger (*ibid.* IV: 220). Interestingly, for the *dharmaśūtrakāras*, gathering of carrion was an accepted method of gathering food for the hermits.

According to Baudhāyana, hermits in the forest belong to two categories: those who cooked their food or did not. The first kind had five subtypes: (a) those who ate everything in the forest (b) those who lived on unhusked wild grain (c) those who ate bulbs and roots (d) those who survived off fruit (e) those whose diet consisted of only pot-herbs. Even the first subtype, i.e., those who ate forest produce, could be of two kinds: (i) the plant eaters and (ii) meat eaters, who gathered the remnants of the kill of tigers, wolves, falcons and other carnivorous animals. Forest produce procured by each category of hermits during the day, was cooked in the evening, offered to ascetics, guests and students, and then consumed (III. 3.1-8). In our narratives we come across many such ascetics but none other than the carrion eaters were designated false ascetics. One other category which was also so proclaimed was the rival sect of the Naked Ascetics or the Ājivikas, who fed on small fish, cowdung and other refuse (*Jātaka* I: 229-30).

Hermits had to forage in the forest everyday for edibles were generally not stored with the exception of salt and seasoning. We are told that ascetics visited the countryside to procure them (*ibid.* IV: 14). But even this practice was strictly avoided by some. The Bodhisatta upbraided his fellow ascetic from Videha when he set aside salt and sugar for a later day. When true ascetic life meant liberation from all forms of attachment, hoarding was unvirtuous (*ibid.* III: 223).

### Consumption of Meat:

It has been pointed out that the Buddhist birth stories provide substantial basis for the view that flesh eating was widespread (Jha 2004:64). Kings were urged to enjoy ghī, rice, milk and meat (*Jātaka* V: 11). Meat and fish were usually cooked in the royal kitchen (*ibid.* VI: 175), and we read about a meat market (*ibid.* III: 230). Even mendicants wore garments of leather (*ibid.* III: 55). Animals were slaughtered as offering to the spirits, and on festive and ceremonial occasions, such as the Kattika festival (*ibid.* V: 109), and the Feast for the Dead (*ibid.* I: 51). Deer meat was particularly relished (*ibid.* IV: 180), and sold in the markets (*ibid.* III: 33). People consumed the flesh of a variety of other animals: fowl (*ibid.* IV: 24), tortoise (*ibid.* IV: 186), monkey, described as ‘savoury meat’ (*ibid.* V: 40), snake (*ibid.* V: 85), ox (*ibid.* V: 86), lizard (*ibid.* III: 57) and pork (*ibid.* III: 181), which was served at weddings as well (*ibid.* I: 75). Meat was avoided on new and full moon days when Buddhists kept Uposatha vows, and it was not sold in the markets (*ibid.* V: 247, VI: 173).

Meat was not denied to the brethren for we read of a greedy inmate who was overjoyed at its mention at an invitation (*ibid.* IV: 45). Even the Bodhisatta as a wealthy merchant’s son had venison delivered to his home by a hunter (*ibid.* III: 34). But the absence of prohibition

on flesh foods did create predicament for the Buddha. The naked ascetics led by Nāthaputta (referring to the Jainas) brought the accusation that Gotama ate meat knowing very well it had been prepared expressly for him. Such charge was not new for him for as an ascetic in an earlier birth a wealthy man maliciously served him fish, and then accused him of the sin of killing living beings. Whereupon the Bodhisatta in his rebuttal explained that a gift may be procured in any manner but there is no sin in taking it (*ibid.* II: 182). ‘...Those who take life are at fault, but not persons who eat the flesh’ (*ibid.* fn.2).

Buddha’s cousin, Devadatta, attempted to create a schism in the Order by proclaiming the Five Points, which is fleetingly referred to in the *Lakkhana Jātaka*, but recounted in detail in the *Cullavagga* (VII. 1). His directives entailed stricter rules, that the bhikkhus shall dwell lifelong in the forest, subsist solely on doles collected out of doors, dress only in discarded rags, live under trees and never eat fish or flesh. Devadatta is depicted in Buddhist scriptures as the Buddha’s rival and hence his attempt to outdo his cousin (*Jātaka* I: 34, fn.1). The food content or its manner of procuring it was not of great concern; rather craving for food was considered more perilous. This was a practical solution in a society where meat eating was common keeping in mind the fact that the bhikkhus were dependant on the resources of a community along with several other contemporary mendicant orders.

Consumption of meat was common among the brāhmaṇas. They were invited to feasts where they were served with flesh and rice (*ibid.* VI: 173). A forest dweller offered a roast leg of deer to a brāhmaṇa in the *Vessantara-Jātaka*, which he readily accepted (VI: 274). There is scathing criticism of the unchaste conduct of the priestly class in the *Dasa-Brāhmaṇa-Jātaka* which says that village folk slaughter several kine, bullocks, goats and swine when they invite brāhmaṇas to their village (IV: 229). But such members of the highest rung of society are no better than butchers for the Buddhist story-tellers. True brāhmaṇas are distinguished by not only by their high ethical values, such as, their wisdom, goodness, and absence from evil lust but also by their gastronomic habits: they eat one meal of rice a day and abstain from strong drink (*ibid.*: 230).

With regard to flesh foods, the rule of abstinence that is upheld in the stories is that pertaining to the meat of five-clawed animals. In the *Mahā-Sutasoma-Jātaka*, the Great Being says ksatriyas were to abstain from the meat of such animals except five (V: 267). This rule of *paÅca paÅcanakhäh-bhakṣyāḥ* was quite well known for our *Jātaka* does not elaborate on it. The *Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* (XIV. 39) enumerates the five kinds of permissible meat of the five-toed animals: the porcupine, the hedgehog, the hare, the tortoise and the iguana. This makes monkey flesh forbidden, yet we get references to its consumption even by brāhmaṇas (*Jātaka* V: 40,121). The practice of killing and eating monkeys is prevalent among the lowest Indian tribes (Kosambi 2005:103), and in all probability it was relished in *Jātaka* times by even the twice born.

The precept of the five-toed animals occurs in the *Mahā-Sutasoma-Jātaka* not in the

context of monkey meat but with reference to the consumption of human flesh. A king of Benaras was extremely fond of rice and meat which he had every day. On a particular holy day, the cook could not procure meat from the market, and to save his life, he decided to take the flesh from a corpse. The king relished it as never before for he had been a *yakkha* in his past life, and decided thereafter to take only human flesh (*Jātaka* V: 247-8). In our narratives, wildernesses were home to goblins and ogres who delighted in the consumption of human and animal flesh. The Bodhisatta, while travelling through a drought and demon wilderness, came across goblins, wearing garland of blue lotuses, who devoured humans and oxen (*ibid.* I: 6). In the *Devadhamma Jātaka*, a water spirit is told that he was condemned to be a demon subsisting on raw flesh and blood of other creatures on account of his evil deeds in his past births. This heinous habit in fact would not prevent his rebirth in hell until he could forgo his evil conduct and live virtuously (*ibid.* I: 27). Many *Jātakas* relate how the Bodhisatta converted these goblins to a simpler and kindlier way of life, which has been interpreted to mean that human sacrifice went out of general fashion (except among some forest tribes) before the time of the Buddha (Kosambi 2005:104).

Meat and fish were not prohibited to the Buddhists but hunting was looked upon as a cruel occupation. In the *Suvarṇamiga-Jātaka*, the hunter has a change of heart after observing the devotion displayed by the doe for the stag that had been caught in the snare. He released the stag who advised him to refrain from taking the life any creature in the future (*ibid.* III: 122-3). There are several such stories in the *Jātakas* where the hunter abdicates his vocation. Even the king of Kosala, who was very fond of hunting not only gave up the chase but declared all animals on land, water and in air to be completely safe. Whereupon, the Bodhisatta pronounced: “Great king, it is good for a king to rule a kingdom by forsaking the ways of wrongdoing...” (*ibid.* III: 173). In the *Saṅkicca-Jātaka*, fishermen and slayers of sheep, pigs and cows are castigated as cruel ‘men of blood’. Those who hunt beasts and birds are overwhelmed by sin and destined for hell (*ibid.* V:139). Brāhmaṇas were forbidden to take animal life (*ibid.* III: 37), yet we have references to some who did not follow this precept. A certain young brāhmaṇa, who developed the desire to eat roasted venison, moved to the Himalayas where he killed deer at pleasure. But the consequences of his deeds were terrifying: he lost control of his limbs and his body withered so much so that he looked like a ghost (*ibid.* III: 279). Flesh foods are tainted, a ruddy goose explained to a crow that lived on carrion and casual prey, unlike the diet of *sevāla* plant that the goose consumed:

Sevāla plant, stript of its skin,  
Yields food without a taint of sin (*ibid.* III: 310).

Condemnation of the slaughter of animals in the *Jātakas* occurs either in the context of certain rituals or festivals, or in the context of hunting. The *Matakbhatta-Jātaka* makes a strong statement against the killing of animals. With the killing of a single goat for making

an offering at the Feast 'of the Dead, the slayer was doomed to suffer the horrific fate of beheading five hundred times (*ibid.* I: 52). The *Dummedha-Jātaka* is set in the context of the festival celebrated by the people of Benaras in honour of the 'gods'. Large numbers of sheep, goats, poultry, swine and other animals were slaughtered. When the Bodhisatta was born as Prince Brahmadatta, he proclaimed that those who were addicted to the killing of living creatures would be offered as sacrifice to the banyan tree. This proclamation was enough to put an end to the 'old wickedness' (*ibid.* I: 127-8). The futility of sacrificing animals is brought forth in several of our narratives (*ibid.* III: 260). A forest dwelling brāhmaṇa in the *Nānguṭṭha-Jātaka* made preparations for sacrificing an ox to Agni. He tied up the animal and went to get some salt from the nearby village. By the time he returned, he found that the ox had been slaughtered and cooked by a band of hunters. He then exclaimed that when the Lord of Fire was unable to protect himself, how could he protect his worshipper? He, thereafter, doused the fire and became a recluse (*ibid* I: 308).

### **Consumption of Drinks:**

In *Jātaka* society drinking was a common phenomenon across people of different social strata, from kings and soldiers to artisans and forest-dwellers. The description of a town refers to drinking shops and taverns, along with slaughter-houses and cooks' shops (*ibid.* VI: 135). Wine merchants were welcomed by kings (*ibid.* V:7). Wines were brewed at home for we have the instance of king SaĀjaya who ordered that a hundred jars of wine be brought by each hamlet to be set by the road by which the royal procession would travel (*ibid.* VI: 299).

Drinking of spirits was associated with festivities. Kings often proclaimed drinking festivals (*ibid.* IV: 73), while we learn of goldsmiths organising a festival with fish, meat and strong drinks (*ibid.* V:228). The people of Benaras had a festival for the ogres when fish, meat and pots of liquor were left in the courtyards and streets (*ibid.* I: 255). Even hermits were offered a large supply of the best spirits on the occasion of a drinking festival by the king of Benaras (*ibid.* I: 20), and ascetics were not immune to the lure of the intoxicants. The liquor *vārunī*, in fact, acquired its name from the ascetic Varuṇa, while *surā* was named after its discoverer Surā, a forester (*ibid.* V: 7). It was not unusual for women to enjoy their drink. Young girls often went to parks with friends to enjoy the day with food and drinks (*ibid.* IV: 236). In the *Kumbha-Jātaka*, we are told that some five hundred women, who were friends of Visākhā, decided to join a drinking festival at Sāvatthi. Visākhā declined to accompany them but does not forbid them. The narrative then describes the inappropriate conduct of these female drinkers in the presence of the Buddha, whereupon he strongly reproved this custom (*ibid.* V: 5-6).

Even the Bodhisatta does not escape from some form of association with spirits. In one of his births, he was fond of the Soma juice, and had the habit of pouring libations

of it, so he was known as Sutasoma or the soma distiller (*ibid.* V: 92). As the Treasurer of Benaras, he had a tavern-keeper who lived under his protection (*ibid.* I: 120). A friend of Anāthapiṇḍika kept a tavern which did not prevent him from keeping up his friendship nor did the Buddha admonish him for his business (*ibid.* I: 120). Anāthapiṇḍika, of course as a true follower, did not indulge in liquor (*ibid.* I: 134). It is even said that a Bodhisatta may even consume drink (*ibid.* III: 296). In his final birth, as king Vessantara, he gave food to the hungry and strong drink to those who required it, and clothes to the needy as gifts, before he was banished (*ibid.* VI: 260). Though it is acknowledged that the gift of spirits brings no merit, yet he did not desist from providing drinks to those who were fond of them so that no one may turn back disappointed.

In the *Kumbha-Jātaka*, we get a candid admission of the fact that drinking was a common practice in Indian society. Sakka, in several verses, expounded the malevolent effects of intoxicants to the king of Sāvatthī, whereupon, he was convinced to practise abstinence and had the drinking vessels destroyed. Despite this, it is lamented that this did not lead to disappearance of the pernicious habit; rather it gradually developed in India (*ibid.* V: 6-11). Drinking was strongly disapproved for it lead to loss of the senses, and the Buddha proscribed it for the members of the Order, declaring it an offence requiring confession and absolution (*ibid.* I: 207). Its vile effects are illustrated in more than one narrative. A king, addicted to strong drink and meat, was not served meat on a particular *uposatha* day (the day when no animals were slaughtered). But he had consumed much liquor and was so enraged when meat was not served, that he killed his young son and ordered his cook to prepare his flesh (*ibid.* II: 136). Spirits were generally proscribed to brāhmaṇas, as is known from the *Mahāsutasoma-Jātaka*. When a young brahmaṇa boy returned home after consuming drinks, his father admonished him saying that he had done very wrong considering that he was a member of a brāhmaṇa family (*ibid.* V: 253). Hermits are also advised to keep away from liquor (*ibid.* IV: 139). The rule of abstention was probably not strictly followed: a Nāga king extended hospitality to priests and brāhmaṇas in his house which was converted into a drinking hall, where they were served food and drinks, garlands and perfumes (*ibid.* VI: 151).

### **Commensality:**

It has been rightly pointed out that our narratives reflect that sharp differences based on class and caste stratification were entrenched in society (Chakravarti 2006: 199). A poor man, who could not afford to make rice-gruel, made an offering of only a cake of husk-powder and water in a coconut shell to the Tree-spirit, while others came with cakes, garlands, perfumes (*Jātaka* I: 252). Gruel was prepared with large grains of rice, while middle sized grains were steamed, and small ones were made into cake after adding the condiments (*ibid.* VI: 184). Rice-gruel, rice and milk with ghī, sugar and honey was the fare of the well-to-do (*ibid.* I: 109). The food of the slaves was very different from that

of their masters. A slave named Kalaṇḍuka, belonging to the Treasurer of Benaras, ran away to a life of luxury and dainties with the daughter of a merchant. When he was caught and brought back, his master condemned him to ‘a slave’s fare’ (*ibid.* I:281). The *Kaṭāhaka-Jātaka* recounts the story of Kaṭāhaka the son of a female slave, who was born on the same day as the son of a rich Treasurer, and both grew up together and had the same education. However, he lived in the fear that his good fortune may not endure and at the slightest mistake, he would be beaten, imprisoned and fed on ‘slave’s fare’ (*ibid.* I: 275). The good fortune of Kaṭāhaka was very much an exception, for the stigma of being an offspring of a slave woman could not be shaken off, even though his/her paternity is derived from the king.

The rules of commensality in society were governed by caste and lineage, and the *Bhadda-sāla Jātaka* provides interesting insight here. When the king of Kosala wished to marry a daughter of the Sākyā clan, they chose Vāsabhakhattiyā, the daughter of a Sākyā prince Mahānāma and a slave woman, as the prospective bride. The Sākyā custom of connubiality prevented a woman of pure lineage from being married outside their clan; at the same time, they could not refuse the king of Kosala. Hence their choice fell on a girl of mixed parentage. But the Kosalans well were aware of the pride of the Sākyas in matter of lineage. They insisted that they would take only such a girl who ate along with clan members. Mahānāma devised an ingenious plan to assure the Kosalans. As he sat down for his meal, Vāsabhakhattiyā was brought in to sit beside her father, and she dipped her hand in the same dish. No sooner had he taken a mouthful in her presence, as instructed earlier, his aides brought him a letter from the king. Holding it in his left hand he read the letter while keeping his right hand in the same dish but did not partake anymore of the food. The maiden meanwhile finished her meal, and the Kosalan messengers were deceived into thinking that she was indeed his daughter (*ibid.* IV: 92). Evidently presence of the daughter was not defiling as her touch. In due course Vāsabhakhattiyā was married to the Kosalan king but the stigma of slave birth was borne by their son Viḍūḍabha. When he visited Kapilavatthu, he was entertained at the royal rest-house but the seat he had used was washed by a slave woman with milk-water (*ibid.* IV: 95).

Hierarchy and pollution taboos are themes that recur in the narratives of the *Jātakas* (Chakravarti 2006: 199). The most derogatory expressions in our stories have been used for the cāṇḍālas, characterised as ‘the lowest race that go upon two feet’ or ‘the meanest men on earth’ (*Jātaka* IV: 248). These outcasts lived outside the village or town in their own settlements. Even sighting a cāṇḍāla was considered a bad omen and people washed their eyes with perfumed water when one was sighted (*ibid.* IV: 236). Therefore the question of sharing or accepting food from such low castes did not arise. The *Mātaṅga-Jātaka* relates how a group of people beat up the cāṇḍāla, Mātaṅga. One day as he was entering the city of Benaras, the daughter of a setthī, Dīṭṭha-maṅgalikā, happened to cast her eyes on him.

When his identity was brought to her knowledge, she remarked that she had seen something that brings bad luck and immediately turned away from the park she was to enter. Her companions were extremely disappointed at having lost the opportunity of enjoying free food and drinks owing to the presence of the low caste man, and vented their anger on him.

Presence of outcasts at meals of brāhmaṇas was sacrilegious. When a cāḍāla, who had become an ascetic arrived at an alms-hall where sixteen thousand brāhmaṇas were having a meal, he was immediately turned away with abusive words. The deities of the city angered by such insulting behaviour towards the sage, seized his son and the brāhmaṇas, and twisted their necks. At the pleading of his wife, Mātaṅga ordained that they could be revived if they were made to taste a bit of the rice gruel from his bowl. Thus, they were revived but as these brāhmaṇas had to taste the leftovers of a cāḍāla, they were declared outcasts by others and had to depart from Benaras. Birth was considered the only benchmark for engaging with an individual in society driven by brahmanical norms. Despite his developing the Eight Attainments and Five Supernatural Faculties, Mātaṅga was still a vile low-caste unworthy of any gifts. The objective of the *Jātaka* is contestation of this brahmanical concept of pre-eminence based on birth: Mātaṅga derides the notion of pride of birth and overwhelming self conceit which lead to vices like drunkenness, hatred, ignorance and greed (*ibid.* IV: 239).

The rules of commensality are illustrated in the *Satadhamma-Jātaka*, which tells the story of a brāhmaṇa and a cāḍāla, who met on the highway, and decided to journey together. The cāḍāla was carrying some provisions, while the other was not. When the cāḍāla offered some food to the brāhmaṇa, he refused to take it from the low caste. By evening he was so famished that he begged some food from the cāḍāla, thinking he would throw away the portion defiled by his touch and eat the rest. No sooner had he done so, the brāhmaṇa suffered from terrible pangs of remorse. He threw up the food with blood cursing himself for his ‘wicked deed’ and eventually died from his sin (*ibid.* II:57-8). Curiously, in his narration the Buddha did not refute the brahmanical theory of pollution; rather it seems he ‘approved’ the destiny that befell the brāhmaṇa. This is not, so to speak, a reflection of the beliefs of the Buddha himself. The faith in ritualistic pollution was so well entrenched that the Master was compelled to resort to this narrative to impress upon the members of the Order the dismal destiny that awaits those who obtain food by resorting to unlawful means.

We notice that there was no prohibition on brāhmaṇas accepting food at the home of a vaiṣya for we have such a reference in the *Ummadantī-Jātaka*. The king sent his priests to the residence of a rich merchant Tiriṭavaccha where they were received with great honour and hospitality and were served rice-milk (*ibid.* V:108). In the *Sudhābhōjana-Jātaka*, we are told that brāhmaṇas begged for some porridge from Macchariyakosiya, a wealthy householder (*ibid.* V: 206). A young brāhmaṇa boy had friends whose food habits were completely

different from his. They consumed fish, meat and strong drinks, from which the boy desisted (*ibid.* V: 252). Yet this did not prevent him from keeping their company. It is not clear from the story if his friends were of the same caste as he but from their food habits it seems unlikely. In some stories, a royal prince and the son of the royal chaplain were raised together and they ate the same food (*ibid.* III: 21).

#### **Temperance:**

What is striking about the *Jātaka* code of food ethics is its laxity, where the issue of concern is not what is consumed, rather how much is consumed and how food is obtained. Even the leavings of a dog were not forbidden food; our *Jātaka* states that if food is gained by lawful means, all food is pure and lawful (*ibid.* IV: 35). The emphasis of Buddhist ethics was on the cultivation of frugality especially among the inmates of the Order. Excessive greed for food is a vice in the eyes of the Buddhists and its perils are illustrated through the some delightful stories. A jackal in the *Pañc-Ūposatha-Jātaka*, was delighted to find an elephant carcass. He discovered that the rump had very soft flesh and he gradually chewed on it till he entered the carcass and remained inside the belly where he slept and ate. But as the carcass began drying in the hot weather, the way out of the belly became narrow and shrivelled up. He was eventually able to squeeze through but not before losing all his fur in the process. The beast realised that greed was the cause of his torment and vowed that he would not venture out for food until he had learnt to subdue his greed (*ibid.* IV: 206-7). Bhikkhus were continually cautioned against the bondage of craving for good food. The lust for taste led many to break their vows, renounce the Sāriṅga, and fall for the charms of a woman. Elder Tissa was one such case who was so enticed by delicious alms he received from a slave girl that finally decided to return to the life of a householder (*ibid.* I: 44-45) The Buddha had to upbraid greedy monks several times for their gastronomic overindulgence, and who were reminded that even in their previous lives as crows, they displayed the same despicable habit (*ibid.* III: 149).

Not only did the lust for taste cloud the senses and deflect the bhikku from his objective, it created practical problems as well, when we keep in mind the fact that mendicants of various persuasions, brāhmaṇas and the indigent were all dependant on the same resource pool. At Sāvatthi, we are told, there were so many bhikkus that a young man who had just joined the Order could manage to get only gruel of broken lumps of rice, stale or decaying solid food or dried and burnt sprouts (*ibid.* III: 276). Immoderation in food would have placed excessive demand on the almsgivers and brought a bad name to the sect. The Buddha admitted that it would prevent the conversion of the unconverted. The Brothers had to exercise caution in their dietary intake, eat in moderation and keep watch over their senses (*ibid.* III: 287). Those who were satisfied with what was easily available attained contentment, happiness and an easy mind (*ibid.* III: 195).

Further, the emphasis on temperance evinces a concern with public perception. The

inmates of the Order could not conduct themselves like brāhmaṇas who were ‘insatiable’ (*ibid.* V: 243), ‘greedy liars’ (*ibid.* VI: 110), keen on conducting sacrifices at any opportunity only to enjoy a lavish feast of fish and meat (*ibid.* III: 257). An amusing parable narrated in the *Aggika-Jātaka* is a telling comment on the practice of duplicity masked by the facade of saintliness. A jackal lost all his fur in a forest fire except a little tuft on his crown that looked like the scalp-knot. His ‘saintly’ appearance deceived the rats into believing that he was Bhāradvāja, worshipper of the Fire-God and that he had come to guard them, though his intention was otherwise. When their dwindling numbers exposed his hypocrisy, the king of the rats sarcastically commented: “It is not sanctity, Bhāradvāja, Votary of the Fire-God, but gluttony that has decked your crown with that top-knot” (*ibid.* I: 283-4). Temperance in food is what differentiated the bhikkus from the brāhmaṇas for abstinence and frugality are equated with virtuousness. As it has been argued, the brāhmaṇa’s claim to pre-eminence frequently appears in the *Jātakas* only to be contested and exposed within the narrative (Chakravati *ibid.*: 199).

Food in the Indian ethos was not only about providing physical nourishment. Sharing and acceptance of food created bonding and friendship. The Buddha said that hospitality received in someone’s house even for a day should never be forgotten, and the recipient should never harbour an evil thought against the host or else he would be guilty of treachery (*ibid.* VI: 149). ‘Food sharing is the medium for creating and maintaining social relations both within and beyond the household’ (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997: 3). An analysis of our narratives leads us to understand that food was perceived as having dual nature. The gift of food is meritorious and is beneficent for the provider. But food can also be perilous and an ensnarement as illustrated in the *Kukkuṭa-Jātaka*, wherein a falcon (Devadatta) tried entice a wild fowl (Bodhisatta) to leave his secure place by inviting him to join him at a place where food is available in plenty (*ibid.* IV: 36). In the Indian cultural tradition food can be dangerous and this is nowhere more evident than in the ascetical traditions of India (Olivelle 1991: 23). What was benedictory for the alms giver could be an anathema for the alms seeker. This dualism is inevitable in a society of householders and renouncers.

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# Mutations within the Tradition of Niyoga; An Assessment from Women's Vantage<sup>1</sup>

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Early Sanskrit literature reflects an obsession with procreation which is regarded as the foremost religious and social duty of men and women. Begetting was not envisaged as a simple act of biological reproduction nor sex reckoned as an independent or self-governing territory. Its regulation can be sighted in the earliest of the texts. In the *Rksaīhita* it is clearly stated that the coming together of a man and woman in a heterogeneous sexual union was essential to perpetuate lineages.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of marriage was stated to be the creation of progeny. In the Suryā marriage hymn of the tenth *mandala*, Prajāpati is invoked to, “bring forth children to us” [X.85.43]. *Manusmṛti* also informs us that women were created to bear children, and men to carry on the line; that is why the revealed canon prescribes a joint duty [for man] together with his wife.<sup>3</sup>

The preferred progeny was the son. Early India shared this obsession with procreation of sons with other ancient societies around the world. With the emergence of complex societies, coming of private property and patriarchy, sons began to be sought after. They were looked upon as promoters of lineage, inheritors of property [especially land] and performers of ancestral rites. Absence of a male issue was regarded a serious aberration in ancient societies including Early India and alternatives were worked out to surmount the problem. *Niyoga* or levirate was one such option wherein a widow or the wife of an impotent man was temporarily made to cohabit with a designated man in order to procure a son who would be regarded as the son of his mother's legal husband. It clearly came within the fold of *āpaddharma* or the law of exigency, something that could be resorted to only in the time of emergency. P.V. Kane has defined *niyoga* as the ‘appointment of a wife or a widow to procreate a son from the intercourse of with an appointed male’.<sup>4</sup> Ancient Indian literature, especially the Sanskritic literature, has given numerous clues to the existence of this practice. There seems to be a divergence of views in the narrative tradition and normative [*sāstriya*] literature on the issue of its genesis and purpose. But what comes out clearly is that *niyoga* was hailed as a ‘strategy of heirship’.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper we intend to look at the trajectory of the practice in ancient and early medieval India from the vantage of principal female actors. A host of queries would be taken up. It would be worth dwelling upon whether the practice of *niyoga* was designed to benefit a particular section of the society or was meant for larger social good. Did the practice of *niyoga* bring women some solace or turned out to be an exploitative way of controlling their sexuality? Did the woman have the right to reject it or enter in out of their volition? Did the practice also have caste and class angles to it? Can we detect

divergence in the views of Brahman theoreticians and members of other castes such as kshatriyas for whom its practical application amounted to a survival tactic? What was the legal and social status of the daughter born of such unions? We shall take up these issues for analysis in the paper.

*Niyoga* as an institution cannot be homogenized as a singular tradition followed in a particular way through the length and breadth of the country and over time and space. It is best understood as a practice which shared its points of commonality with many similar cultures but also shaped up differently in accordance with perceived requirements of a particular society. By and large *niyoga* has its genesis in pastoral cultures or those which followed simple agriculture. It consolidated where the population was unstable but land became an item of hereditary transmission. With passage of time even as its immediate relevance reduced in fully developed agrarian and urban set up, it continued to stay in the historical memory of the populace to be invoked whenever required. The societies practicing *niyoga* were largely patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal but the levels of patriarchal hold certainly varied. Sons were preferred over daughters and in most of the societies the daughters did not have inheritance rights especially in land. The practice can be located in caste framework as well with almost all castes pursuing it at some or other level and at some point in historical trajectory. Yet there were disparities that can be located on temporal, spatial and cultural canvases.

For the reconstruction of *niyoga* in early India and early Medieval period, we have to access Vedic literature, Epics, Purāṇas, Dharmasūtras, Smṛtis and medieval commentaries on them. Most of these sources are brahmanical and give us a view from an elitist vantage. Non brahmanical sources such as *Jātakas* and *Gāthāsuptuśuti* also give us a popular perspective on the institution and how it was viewed by women participants.

In the early Indian context practices akin to *niyoga* could be cited right in the Vedic literature. The Vedic societies inhabiting North Western region of the subcontinent and then the Ganga belt were largely pastoral societies but practiced incipient agriculture. Land inheritance was still not the crucial issue but sons were required in incessant tribal wars. These patriarchal societies would not allow any womb to lay fallow even if these belonged to a woman whose husband died. The verses X.18.8<sup>6</sup> and X.40.2<sup>7</sup> of the *Rksaṃhitu* reflect a relationship between the brother in law and the widow.<sup>8</sup> The funeral verses of *Atharvaveda* [XIV.2.17], like those of the *Rksaṃhitu* also give a clear sense of a widow entering into a stable relationship with the *didhiṣu*. We are still not clear from the above mentioned verses whether the brother sired children in the name of dead brother or not. However, it does become clear that in the patriarchal milieu of the later Vedic texts, a widow was considered a form of property by the dead man's family and her womb and labour would have been pragmatically utilized by his family members. There is, however, another possibility at work. The arrangement could be a welfare measure for a widow. This was a strong argument in

the ancient Judaism for following the practice of levirate. We may not get evidence in subsequent periods in support of the argument; its possibility in the early and later Vedic periods cannot be completely ruled out.

Sometimes there was godly intervention to resolve the problem of childlessness. In the *Rksaūhita*, Aśvins were sought after as good surrogates. In the *rcas* I.111.19, I.117.20 and X.39.7, we get a sense of Aśvins not just assisted sage Vimada in acquiring a bride [I.112.19], but also helped the ‘weakling’ [Vimada] in getting a son. This is a clear allusion to a *niyoga* like relationship between them and Vimada’s wife. Similarly the twins also aided Vadhrimatī in getting a son called śyāva [*Rksaūhita*, X.65.12, I.116.13]. The hymn IV.42.8-9 possibly refers to Indra and Varuṇa coming to the aid of Purukutsa’s wife in getting a son Trasdasyu, through *niyoga* when Purukutsa was held in captivity. The godly reference can be rationalized; it attempts to disguise the identity of the human *niyogin*, and granting a divine stamp to the product of the unions.

The *Mahābhārata* gives us information on a range of *niyoga* unions. The kernel of the story certainly belongs to the Later Vedic period and its first text, The Ādi Parva abounds in references to *niyoga* like relationships. The social milieu is still largely pastoral and that of early agriculture, but a significant change has occurred in the political formations. *Janapadas* and *rāṣṭras* based on territory have begun emerging and with it the issue of land transmission and succession to the throne acquire new dimensions. A successor was crucial to continuation of lineage who would inherit land and title. Caste society was in full swing at least in the Yamuna-Ganga Doab where the main war was apparently fought and the Middle Ganga basin where the story would be eventually redacted. Among the rājanyas/kshatriyas succession is extremely relevant, so Satyavati first made the request to Bhīṣma to give up his vow of celibacy and enter into alliance with her daughter’s-in-law to reproduce an heir for the throne. She specifically appealed to the concept of *āpaddharma* [Law of Distress] and urged him, in the capacity of the brother of the deceased, ‘to beget children on his wives so that the line may continue’.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter she pushed her daughters-in-law, Ambikā and Ambāikā, to enter into a relationship with her other son, Veda Vyāsa.<sup>10</sup>

Pāṇḍu too, made the request to his wife Kunti to cohabit with a good brahman and save Pāṇḍu himself. However, he did not cite territorial succession as the main reason; it was a spiritual factor that spun him into action. The doors of heaven were closed to a man without sons.<sup>11</sup> Uddālaka’s wife mated with a brahman to beget his son Śvetaketu.<sup>12</sup> We also have example of brahman woman cohabiting a can candāla āla to produce a son, Matanga, to be accepted by his legal brahman father.<sup>13</sup> Kalmāṣapāda Saudas sent his wife Madyantī to his teacher Vasiṣṭha to beget a progeny.<sup>14</sup> Puranic stories inform us that he was a very unwilling *ksetrin* who felt victimized by circumstances. Śāradāṇḍāyanī was asked by her husband to chose a perfect brahman husband and beget sons for him.<sup>15</sup> This kind of *niyoga* seemed to be remote controlled where the husband gives in a broad format of sexual union to be

formalized but does not choose a mate himself. We also get information of an odd kind of *niyoga* of the queen Bhadra Kaksivatī. She did not get pregnant when her husband Vyusitāśva was alive but had sons from him when he died.<sup>16</sup> It appears to be a case of *niyoga* where the identity of real genitor was deliberately hidden to highlight the devotion of wife to a husband in a typical patriarchal set up. Similarly the myth of Dīrghatamas is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and some puranas and informs us of how the impotent king Bali requested sage Dīrghatamas to cohabit with his wife Sudeṣanā to beget progeny for him.<sup>17</sup> Another story of the *Mahābhārata* that gives us a scheme for a strange *niyoga* like relation is the story of Mādhavī where a daughter driven by her duty towards the father and his subjects reproduces four sons for four men out of short term sexual relations.<sup>18</sup> This we have termed as 'alternative *niyoga*' where the *niyogin* was not a man and the woman's womb did not belong to one man, her husband. It did not fall within strict framework of *niyoga* as spelt out in the smṛtis and śāstras but certainly came very close to it in its import.

It was in the post Vedic societies reflected in the dharmasūtras that the effective formalization of the practice took place. Now the practice was given its formal nomenclature in the texts. By this time agriculture had certainly become the dominant occupation at least within the rural middle Ganga belt. The socio-political milieu was also changing; on the one hand there was more steady food supply and relative stability in the population growth, on the other there was a greater need of clarifying inheritance laws as transfer of land was becoming a major issue. Moreover *Mahājanpadas* or the territorial empires had come up making this issue all the more relevant within the royal circles. Not only was caste system well established but this period was also associated with the coming up of various sub-castes of *jātis* that became great social identity markers. The dharmasūtras of Āpastamba, Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Gautama began deliberating on the issue. Even the non brahmanical literature especially the Jātakas began alluding to it. The practice must have been already pervasive among many sections of the society. The norm setters of the day addressed this issue primarily for the elite/upper classes but their views would become far more spread out subsequently. Interestingly, what comes out is a plurality of views on the issue within the brahmanical framework itself. The reason must be that the practice was received or reviewed differently in different societies represented by the texts. We ascribe the texts largely to north India up to the Vindhyaś but even this is a large expanse of land and regional variations were bound to come up.

The Gautama and Vasistha dharmasutras condoned the practice and delineate the details about its effective materialization. The preferred surrogate was the *devara* or the younger brother and the aim was stated clearly; the begetting of son in the absence of one due to husband's impotency or death. The emphasis was clearly on a temporary alliance and on detached procreation of a healthy heir and thereafter the resumption of old ties between the two participants. This kind of approach was clinical and pragmatic with a deliberate

undermining of emotional ramifications of such an alliance. The normative texts do not give us a sense of women's approach to the issue a part from stating that this arrangement could be beneficial to a woman/widow desirous of having an offspring. The assumption is clear that the wife/widow would seek her social security through this kind of an agreement.

There were also norm setters such as Āpastamba who were critical of this kind of alliance. The authors of this dharma sutra forbade polyandry and condemned *niyoga* in the same breath. We are told of the harsh consequences of solemnizing such a union. *Manusmṛiti*, a dharmaśāstra, of the post Mauryan period heats up the debate on the relevance and continuation of the practice. This text belongs to north India, with its base in the Ganga belt and reflects a society that experienced expansion in agriculture and urbanism and growth in population. A changed socio-economic milieu implied a revision of existent social mores. The institution of *niyoga* also received multifarious comments in the text, and at times appearing to be contradictory. So Manu in one passage accepts the practice as an emergency measure [IX.59] especially in the context of a young bride to be acquired through a payment of bride-price [IX.97] only to reject it in another and leaving it to be pursued only by animals and people of low caste, especially the shudras [IX.64-67]. At best Manu's acceptance of the practice may be acknowledged as reluctant. The text itself tries to represent distinct and contradictory views of numerous societies it was associated with but what becomes evident is a growing brahmanical discontent against giving inheritance rights in the property to a *ksetraja*, the son born out of *niyoga*. This may have partially been because there was steady growth in population and from the point of view of the law setters; there may be no need to utilize procreative faculties of widows and wives of impotent men. Simultaneous consolidation of patriarchal mores and emphasis on purity of lineage may have prompted them to confine the sexual subsistence of woman to just one husband.

Apart from a brahmanical view on this practice we also start getting non-brahmanical views from the Jātaka stories. For us this is a view that acquires its weight from the fact that Jātakas represents a popular outlook not easily skimmed through brahmanical traditions. Once again, the word *niyoga* is not used; in fact we don't even get a sense of it being a regular practice. In *Suruci Jātaka*<sup>19</sup> this practice is obliquely mentioned or rather resorted to in dire circumstances, when the king's numerous wives fail to reproduce. Finally, the chief queen prays for 'divine intervention', as happens in the Vedic stories, and the couple was blessed with a progeny. The story is significant from a number of vantages. It shows that 'divine intervention' mechanism was resorted to by many communities especially if it were the crucial issue of political succession. Secondly, in this case *niyoga* was followed only when the alternative of polygyny failed. His numerous wives failed to reproduce. The king's impotence became too evident for anybody to ignore and yet it was never made explicit. The suffering was borne by the chief queen and other wives who took it as their fate.

Only towards the end of the story *niyoga* was resorted to in the name of public good; when the subjects of the king demanded the lineage of the ruler be perpetuated. Once again it becomes clear that the mechanism of *niyoga* was rooted in a patriarchal system, whether we look at Buddhist tradition or brahmanical. The Buddhist *Jātakas* also recognized a variety in *niyoga* arrangements. It was not just divine intervention that was sought, at times a levirate agreement where the brother-in-law takes charge of a widowed sister-in-law was also acceptable, as can be seen from the story of *Khandahalajātaka*.<sup>20</sup> A daughter-in-law was discouraged to choose death [*sati*] on husband's death as there were many brothers-in-law to look after her.

The Gupta and Post Gupta societies of north India saw a brahmanical constriction on *niyoga*. The period can be described as one which witnessed a gradual decline in long distance trade and monetization of economy but a simultaneous enhancement of the area under plough as many land grants were being made to brahmans and *sāmantas*. There were invasions by outsiders many of whom actually settled down within the Indian subcontinent. The result from, the sociological perspective, was a simultaneous assimilation of new groups as well a strong resistance from them. Codification of laws became a pre-requisite to effective administration and dispensation of justice. *Niyoga*, too, needed to be reviewed in the new circumstances. The smṛtis of the period were less ambivalent in their attitude towards the institution. A study of the Br̥haspatismṛti<sup>21</sup> and Nāradasmṛti<sup>22</sup> is useful in understanding brahmanical attitudes towards the practice. What became manifest was that the issue of *niyoga* moved out of the domain of mere social norms meant for guidance to concrete laws used by the state courts to dispense justice. And here we find the authors of the *Br̥haspatismṛti* critiquing the practice in no uncertain terms.

How was the institution viewed by the commentators of early medieval India? We need to have some idea of political and social formations of the time and locales. With the decline of the Gupta Empire and the passing of their successors in the northern India, there was growth of regional polities. While, on the one hand historical interest shifts southwards to the Deccan and to the area referred to as the Tamilkam with a focus on constant political strife amongst them, the simultaneous development in regional histories of Bengal, Kashmir and Rajasthan also catch our attention. The division of the peninsula into plateau kingdoms on the west and the coastal kingdoms of the east increased the desire of each to control the entire waterway, particularly the Godavari-krishna Rivers. For three hundred years after the mid-sixth century three major kingdoms were in conflict in the area. They were Chalukyas of Badami, The Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai all seeking to control the fertile tracts. Later Cholas became a power to reckon with in the region as did the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan. By the fifteenth century, the Vijayanagar Empire had a pervasive presence in the south Indian historical process.

The response of the commentators was varied. There certainly was an attempt to

marginalize it but the interpretation was varied and context specific. Bhāruci, is the earliest commendatory on the *Manusmṛti* from south India. He allowed the widow to enter into a *niyoga* relationship to secure a son.<sup>23</sup> Similarly Medhātithī the author of *Manubhāṣya*, a commentary on *Manusmṛti* did not appear to be very unkind in his treatment of the levirate arrangements.<sup>24</sup> The ninth century author from Kashmir had to deal with a very different scenario in his homeland and unlike Manu of the Ganga belt he could not afford to be very dismissive about the institution of *niyoga*. Medhātithī did not reserve it only for the people from the lower caste. On the other hand, he was emphatic about using it as a way of redeeming a situation of heirlessness. Compared to many other north Indian states, Kashmir's geographical contours would have defined its distinct social dynamics. The problem of population growth and available supply of food and labour may have shaped up Medhātithī's views in a way different from other early medieval/medieval commentators. However, there were other commentator such as Kullakbhatta<sup>25</sup> [from Bengal], Rāghava and Nandana who were clearer in their proscription of the arrangement suggesting that its relevance had waned in their contemporary societies.

Similarly the commentators on *Yajnavalkya* too began questioning the continuity of the practice of *niyoga*. The issue got linked to two simultaneous processes; grant of property rights to the childless widow and growing ascetization of the widow. There was a debate among medieval scholars on the issue whether a woman should submit to *niyoga* or not in order to access property of her husband. Bhoja of Dhāra, was clear that *niyoga* and the birth of a *kṣetraja* was a prerequisite to acquisition of husband's wealth but Vijñaneśvar opposed the practice tooth and nail and stated that a woman/widow was entitled to a certain share of her husband's property irrespective of her being with or without a son. However he was careful not to grant a widow to the right to alienate the property.<sup>26</sup>

## II

### **Response of Female Actors**

Our query is how the institution was reviewed by the female participants. Was the acceptance easy or did it get challenged in different societies at different points in time. The contestations must have come up from within the system as well as from those who observed from the outside. We have purposely avoided the usage of the term 'feminist perspective' because feminist consciousness draws attention to the pervasive patterns of subordination; limitations and confinement that have hampered and crippled the development of the female half of the humankind.<sup>27</sup> It grants women a kind of realization that they have been continuously and purposely being segregated from power and also a sense of 'agency'. Further, the idea of woman's 'agency' may become problematic both in theory and practice; because women were simultaneous class differentiated and subject to the frequent cross class expansion of patriarchal ideologies and 'their agency' may not remain open to self

evident modes of collectivization.<sup>28</sup> In fact given the kind of source material at our disposal, which is largely brahmanical in nature, we can risk a generalization. There seems to be an absence of self conscious women 'agents' with transformative potentialities. Even when they had not initiated movements they may have utilized their agential competence to question existent patriarchal prescriptions.

It may also be important to point out that protest against some aspects of patriarchal subjugation often came along with consent to others. The world that we are looking at was very complex. Today consent may be recognized as a major impediment to organized resistance but it seemed to have been a survival tactics in a day and age where women were socialized into subordination early in life. Women would have tolerated, accepted patriarchal values and even contributed to their sustenance in return for personal protection and privileges.

Right from the time of her birth, a girl child's identity was linked to her reproductive potential. Some societies and caste groups could not negate her labouring potentials especially the early agrarian tribal societies or the low caste groups but none could deny that her chief utility lay in her being the future mother of sons. Her reproductive potential made her an asset as well an object of panic for the custodians of state and society. The possible control of her own sexuality implied that she would use her procreative faculties in her own way and that could leave men in a quandary about the identity of their own progeny/heirs. So in societies where she could be removed from primary production and public spaces as was the case among upper caste societies, she was removed and made completely dependent on the men within the natal or marital homes. One way of reducing her autonomy was by framing norms and creating myths that censured her mobility and sexuality. Even in societies where she had a productive presence the aspiration of men for upward mobility ensured an attempt to limit her say in matters associated with sex and procreation.<sup>29</sup> If latitude in entering into multiple sexual relations was allowed to a woman it was done more out of concern for the maximization of her fertile life. An unproductive menstrual period was viewed as akin to abortion and the leeway given to women was precisely to preclude the happening.

How was *niyoga* viewed by women across the board in early India? We need to acknowledge that views of women across social groups, castes and culture specific patriarchies are difficult to assess given the kind of textual material we have at our disposal. Most of the material that we possess is reflective of the views of upper caste men. Therefore to access literature that airs the views of women and that too from the lower castes is a tough task. Non-brahmanical literature may assist us in some ways but *niyoga* was not rigorously discussed therein even when there is preoccupation with issues related to female sexuality. The brahmanical literature did give the issue enough space especially in the early texts. Women's voice may not really surface in here except in indirect ways. In the majority

cases from the epics, at least, the initiative of *niyoga* is taken by people other than the women themselves. And the choice of partners is made by these, ‘authoritative others’<sup>30</sup>

The legal texts primarily echoed the views of male custodians of society but the narratives do give us a peep into how some women participants evaluated the issue. Prescriptive texts like the *Manusmṛti* viewed the practice primarily from the male brahmanical perspective and gave little choice to women actors’ about accepting or rejecting it. The reluctant acquiescence in the institution was a product of belief that only a son could carry on the lineage. Female volition was hardly ever counted. However, one rare example comes from *Manusmṛti* where on death of the prospective groom, it is recommended that the girl promised into marriage should be actually asked for consent to enter into a *niyoga* relationship with her brother-in-law [IX.97]. This appears to be a rare example but may actually suggest the existence of an alternative to forced *niyoga* arrangement.

Even as choices were made for them not every female actor took it without remonstration. Kunti openly aired her ideas against it. She questioned the design of *niyoga* for someone who had been too much in love with her husband. In a way she protested against the segregation of the pleasure of love from sex and finally resorted to having a sexual union only with gods and thereby not allowing men to exercise their control over her body. Ambikā, Ambālikā and Sudeṣṇā protested against *niyoga* in oblique ways. The *Mahābhārata* informs us that Ambikā closed her eyes on being forced to mate with ugly Veda Vyāsa, Ambālikā turned pale. Sudeṣṇā also tricked Dīrghtamasa by sending in her maid. Their resistance to mate with men chosen for them registered their protest at not being included in the decision over who their *niyoga* partner would be. The prospect of entering *niyoga* at somebody else’s behest must have been extremely unwelcome to them. Besides, we are also informed of the tales of Śāradāṇḍāyanī and Madayantī who did not openly oppose the practice but entered in it very reluctantly, as a favour to their husbands. In other words there were ways and ways in which women in the myths managed to convey their sense of indignation at being subjected to a practice that was aimed apparently at mere clinical sexual interaction but would actually amount, in their perception, to an obvious transgression of their private self. The problem would have got complicated in the context of a household where a woman would be subjected to shifts in emotional and social equations with her brother-in-law. From treating him as brother when her husband was alive, she would have to look up to him as a potential husband on his death. This could confound her sense of social propriety. 15

*Gāthāsaptaśati*, a non brahmanical text composed in *Mahārāṣtri* Prākrit during early centuries of the Common Era, gives us a sense of complexity in the relationship between the sister-in-law and her *devara*. There are differences of detail in the verses: In verse 1.35 she warns him of coming too close to her by referring to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa but in the

verse I.28 she shows physical signs of having engaged in love-play with him and in V.69, she exhibits jealousy because of his involvement with another woman. Even as there is no assured *niyoga* relationship mentioned, the possibility of this cannot be completely ruled out.

The issue of *niyoga* was not without its share of intricacies. On the one hand it appeared to be extremely unfair to its women participants, on the other; we also have examples of women who apparently entered the unions out of their volition, sometimes to save the kshatriya caste as was the case after Paraśurāma's curse<sup>31</sup> or to save the father and his kingdom as was the case with Madhavī.<sup>32</sup> In the myth she cohabited with four men to reproduce sons for them and gain a particular breed of horses in return. She did this save her father from sage Gālava's fury who demanded the horses or would have ruined her father king Yayātī and the entire kingdom. Madhavī's enterprise appeared to be commercial; she got a tangible fee for her act. Woman given the same charge may be bracketed in the category of prostitutes as a virtual transaction had taken place. But a closer reading of Madhavī's myth makes it clear that she also functioned almost like a female *niyogin* or the 'appointed one'.<sup>33</sup>

In fact the normative tradition states that a man must unite with his wife during her fertile season [*rtugamana*]. In many a myths, women attempt to seduce men who were not their husbands arguing that if the men refused, their fertile period would be fruitless. The story of Uttanka and his guru's wife in the *Mahābhārata* reflects the concern.<sup>34</sup> When Uttanka was put in charge of the household by his teacher during latter s absence from the *āśrama*, Uttanka took serious care of his teacher's house and family. Then one day he was asked by his teacher's wife to cohabit with her as she was in her fertile phase and in the absence of her husband she feared that it would go waste. The women of the house implored Uttanka to render her this service as she was depressed. Uttanka refused to oblige, calling it a crime. Even as the cohabitation did not happen, the insistence of the woman/women to enter into a sexual relationship with a man other than her/their husband appeared to be an accepted one especially during his/their long absence as it did echo the acknowledgement of her/their primary social duty and possibly of their desire to procreate.

The desire to procreate was acknowledged as a legitimate desire on the part of any woman. Unmarried woman also seek out men out of desire for children. In the Adiparva of the *Mahābhārata*, when Śarmishthā was given out as slave to Devyānī and had no prospects of marriage herself, she finally approached Devyānī's husband, Yayātī. She requested him to cohabit with her despite his vow to avoid intercourse with any slave. She made her plea on the ground of her being a woman and a woman in her season must not be turned away. Yayātī was, therefore, persuaded. He gave due consideration to the matter and agreed that, 'if a man chosen by a woman who begged for her season refused her, the wise would call him an aborter'.<sup>35</sup>

The *Mahābhārata* has another legend that refers possibly to a *niyoga* on the persistence of a woman. This is the case of Ūlupī, the Kauravya-nāga princess whose son Irāvat was possibly begotten by Arjuna by the way of a *niyoga*.<sup>36</sup> One version makes her the widowed and childless ‘*snuṣa*’ of the kauravya king, the other the widowed and childless ‘*sūta*’. Any way it appeared that she was eagerly looking for a suitable ‘agent’ with the permission of her father-in-law, when she met Arjuna at Gangādvāra. Arjuna had been exiled as he had entered the premises when Draupadī was with her other husband and as per an understanding had to spend a year in exile as a hermit. He was, therefore, reluctant to breach his *brahmacarain* vow for the year but Ūlupī, persuaded him to accompany her to the Naga palace close by and stay with her for a short time till she conceived of him. The details in her matter show that the initiative was wholly hers bearing striking similarity with Śāradāṇḍāyanī’s case with regard to quest and random selection. Interestingly in this story she did not cohabit with ‘*pitravya*’, the younger brother of the deceased Naga prince who was displeased at the prospect of the *kṣetraja* son of the elder brother getting the throne. This eventually resulted in Irāvat’s expulsion from the Kauravya court. Similarly in *Suruchi Jātaka*, too, as the earnestness of the female participant comes out strongly in the myth especially as she had to assure the subjects of her kingdom of ensured lineage.

The willingness to follow the *niyoga* apparently emanated from the desire to do both personal as well as social good. *Niyoga* ensured motherhood for childless women or widows and this implied social prestige along with a reassurance of a safe future for themselves and their children, if they could procure sons of levirate unions. But there must have been moral/social pressure at work as well. This could have been a result of an internalization of her duties as a woman. As Arti Dhand opines that a woman’s duty to produce children was of such paramount importance that it functioned as an extenuating condition overriding the usual conventions of society.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, compared to celibate widowhood or worse still the possibility of forcing to commit *sati*, an alliance of *niyoga* would have been preferable. The practice of *niyoga*, or practices akin to it have continued especially among women of low castes and some other social groups in contemporary societies. It is quite likely that many women would have followed it out of their consent even in early India. It may then be difficult to generalize an absolute exploitative marginalization of women in all possible *niyoga* situations. Even as there appears to be a stronger context for a patriarchal subjugation of women and their sexuality and the containment of women’s protest on the issue of *niyoga*, there also appears to be the case of occasional concurrence in it by women participants. *Niyoga*, with its foremost aim of ensuring reproductive continuity was not unproblematic for the populace and especially for the formulators of norms who kept the debate alive by promoting, modifying, rejecting or accommodating the practice throughout the course of early Indian history and perhaps later too.

It is worth pointing out that even as women were seeking to secure their future through production of sons they rarely figured in as guardians of their sons. The debate about whom the *kṣetraja* belongs to often obviates the position of the mother. Most of the texts deliberate over the issue of who the seed belongs to; the owner of the field or the inseminator. The point about the role of the female in the process of procreation and her right on the progeny is by and large marginalized. This may have been the case with other types of sons as well. However, Nārada apparently made the reference to the mother's right over the son as well. He mentioned that, 'there can be no crops without the soil, nor is there any seed without the seed, hence the child is held to belong both to the father and the mother.'<sup>38</sup> But the enumerated duties of the son were largely for the benefit of the father. The mother was only assured a safe existence with her son on demise of her husband.

There is another issue related to *niyoga* alliance that needs to be given some consideration. What happened to the girl child born out of a *niyoga* alliance? The mythmakers and law formulators had been so obsessed in their orientation towards a male heir that they had very little to say about a female child born of such unions. By and large the texts are silent about her. We come across only rare references to her being. Medhātithī is not completely dismissive of a girl born of *niyoga* [*niyogōtpannā*], but at the same time takes the view that one should not voluntarily marry such a girl.<sup>39</sup> While commenting on *Manusmṛti*'s Discourse-III [girls recommended for marriage], Medhātithī commented '*niyoga* having being permitted, that girl who would be born under that form would not be excluded by the foregoing qualifications [on the basis of *gotra*, name etc]; hence she is separately excluded by the term, 'who is not born of unlawful intercourse'; which means that one should not voluntarily marry a girl born of *niyoga*, because she is born of unlawful intercourse.<sup>40</sup> This statement should be gauged in the context of gradual decline of the practice at least within the dharmasastric discourse. As it were the *niyoga* alliances were not recommended except in dire circumstances to men/families without the scope of producing a natural heir. The birth of a daughter was generally not viewed positively and there seems hardly any reason to believe that a *niyogōtpannā*, would have been welcomed.

Interestingly she is called a *niyogōtpannā*, and 'amaithuni' one not recommended for religious functions and marriage. On the other hand, the son born of such a union was called a *kṣetraja*. Her connection with the field of the father was not stressed at all in the *bhāṣya*. Her birth would have been viewed as a chance blocked in securing property or continuation of the lineage. For a *niyogōtpannā*, the sense of discrimination would have then doubled with the normative suggestion that she was not an ideal choice as a wife. Like other women her sexuality was also determined by her caste, class but with an additional qualification of not being born of a preferred marital alliance.

Another text, *Nirāṇaya Sindhu*, has a reference to the daughter born of *niyoga* and she is referred to as '*niyogōtkṣetraja*'.<sup>41</sup> It is a seventeenth century *nibandha* and quotes

Kātyāyana to suggest that the *Kanyādāna* [the ritual of giving away of daughter at the time of marriage] of a daughter born of the practice can be done only by her maternal grandmother, mother or maternal uncle. The *kṣetrin* or her mother's husband and his family are out of purview of this marriage ritual. *Viramitrōdaya*, another seventeenth century text of Mitramisra also repeats the contention of Kātyāyana. The term used for the daughter born of *niyoga* is ‘*niyogōtpaditā*’<sup>42</sup>, i.e one born out of *niyoga*. The absence of any connection with *kṣetrin* in this context is telling and can be juxtaposed to *kṣetrin*'s asserted rights on, *kṣetraja*, the son born of the union. The status of a daughter born of the practice seems to be peculiarly complex because on the one hand she is referred to as a *dharmajā*, i.e one with socially sanctified birth but on the other hand her legal father does not appear to own his responsibility as a father. The fact that the mother and her natal family are involved in the marriage ritual also leads to the speculation that the daughter of such a union was possibly brought up in her maternal grandparents home.

Her confounding status some times as *dharmajā* and at other times as *amithunī* highlights the quandary legal and social commentators were in. Surely her presence was not warranted in their world view and yet the ground reality reminded them of her existence. Many commentators chose to ignore her completely and those who did recognize her presence were reluctant to elaborate on her social status. It is also not very clear that she could ever get the status of a *putrikā*. *Putrikā* is a daughter of a sonless man on whose sons her father could have ritual rights and to whom his property could be passed on. Incidentally *putrikādharmīnī* is also not recommended as a potential wife. In the *Mahābhārata* Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhīra, ‘Bull of the Bhāratas, one ought never to marry a girl who does not have a brother or a father—for she is a *putrikādharmītī*.<sup>43</sup> However, compared to *niyogōtpanna* her status seems better because once she gets married both she and her son has a financially secure future. The fact remains that the references on the *niyoga* daughters are too few and far between and the issue needs to be explored further.

What were the implications of mutations within the practice? Did these mutations really help the women participants? Did they really stand to benefit from the practice and vacillations within it? In an attempt to assess who really stood to benefit from the practice of *niyoga* and its variations, it appears that the real beneficiaries were those who framed the rules of social governance and were in a position to implement them. The normative acquiescence, promotion and later marginalization of the practice, appear to reflect fluctuating brahmanical notions of ‘social good’ that can be located in distinct social formations. By and large normative texts and their commentaries are silent on women's perspective on the institution of commissioned procreation. The narrative literature including epics, *purāṇas*, and *Jātakas*, however, provides us with views on *niyoga* from kshatriya vantage and also gives us a peep into women's stand on it. Over all it appears to be far more accommodative and reflective of ground realities. *Niyoga* as a social institution

could be both accepted and frowned upon by female actors and that often depended on the specific context.

## Notes

- 1 This is a modified version of the paper titled, 'Gendered Inquiry into *Niyoga*: Appraising the institution from the perspective of female actors' presented at Indian History Congress, 72nd session at Patiala, December 2010.
- 2 *Rksaūhita*, X. 85, 27, 38, 43. *The Hymns of Rgveda*, tr. Ralph T.H. Griffith, Motilal Banarsi Das, Delhi, Reprint, 1991
- 3 *Manusmṛti*, IX. 96. *The Laws of Manu*, Tr. Wendy Doniger and Brian Smith, Penguin Classics, 1991
- 4 P.V. Kane ed. *History of Dharmasāstras*, Vol II, chap. XIII, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, pp. 599
- 5 The term has been borrowed from Jack Goody's *Production and Reproduction A Comparative Study of Domestic Domain*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, who has shown that polyandry, polygyny adoption and concubinage are among some of the 'strategies of heirship' in the ancient and modern societies of Eurasia and Africa.
- 6 *Udīraśva nāriyabhi jīvalokam gatāsumetamupa śeṣa ehi hastagrābhṣya didhiṣostavedum patyurjanitvamapi saṁ bhabhūtha.*  
*Rise woman [and go] to the world of living beings;*  
*Come this man near whom you sleepest is lifeless;*  
*Thou has just enjoyed the state of being the wife to your husband;*  
*The suitor who took thee by the hand.*  
The verse is to be spoken by the husband's brother and he is to make her leave her husband's body. The Asvalayana Ghrihya sutra reiterates it in the verse IV.2-a hymn addressed to the Aswins,
- 7 *Kuha dvid doṣā kuha vastrośvinā kuhābhīpitvarī karataḥ*  
*ko varī śayutrā vidhwaveva devararī marayām na yosā kṛṣute sadhastha ā*  
*Where were you Aswins by night?*  
*Where are you by day?*  
*Where do you sojourn ?*  
*Who takes you to bed in a dwelling place*  
*As on the couch a widow [brings] her husband&Es brother*  
*As a woman brings her husband to her bed.*
- 8 Medhātithī, *Manubhāṣya* IX.66 explains *Rksaūhita* X.40.2 as applying to *niyoga*
- 9 *Mahābhārata*, I.97.10-24.
- 10 *Mahābhārata*, I.99.45-47.
- 11 *Mahābhārata*, I.111.10-35.
- 12 Ibid, XII.35.22.
- 13 Ibid, XII.27-29.

- 14 Ibid, 1.113.10-30.
- 15 Ibid, I.III.34-36.
- 16 Ibid, I.112.15-30
- 17 Ibid, I.98.25.
- 18 Ibid, V.115 ff.
- 19 E.B. Cowell ed., *The Jātakas*, Vol. IV, reprint Indian edition, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, pp. 198-205.
- 20 Ibid, Vol.VI., no. 542, reprint Indian edition, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, pp. 68-80.
- 21 *Bṛhaspati smṛti*, Julius Jolly trans and ed., The Minor Law Books, part 1, *Nāradasmṛti* and *Bṛhaspati smṛti Sacred Books of the East*, Vo.33. chap 24-25.
- 22 *Nāradasmṛti*, Julius Jolly trans and ed., The Minor Law Books, part 1, *Nāradasmṛti* and *Bṛhaspati smṛti*, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vo.33. chap.12
- 23 J.D.M. Derret, *Bharuci's Commentary on the Manusmṛti*, the Manusastra Vivarna, Books 6-12, Texts, Translation and Notes, Vol 2, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden,1975.
- 24 *Manubhāṣya* ed by Ganganath Jha, 2nd ed. Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi, 1999, Vol. 10, X Vols.
- 25 *Mānvarthamuktrāvalī* Ed. By Sivaraja Acarya Kaudinyayana, Chaukhamba series, Varanasi, 1992.
- 26 *Yajnavalkya Smṛti* [with Mitākṣara, Subodhinī and Balambhaṭī] ed. Setlur, S.S. Brama Vadin Press, Madras, 1912.
- 27 Keohane, Rosaldo and Gelpi, eds. *Feminist theory; A Critique of Ideology*, 1982, pp. ix-x.
- 28 Kum Kum Sangari, *Politics of Possible, Essays on Gender, History, Narratives, Colonial English*, Tulika , New Delhi.
- 29 The process of sanskritization or brahmanization entailed an attempt at upward mobility by lower caste men. This necessitated an aping of social norms and ritual practices of the higher castes. Constriction on women's mobility or decision making was steps taken in that direction.
- 30 Arti Dhand, 'The subversive nature of virtue in the *Mahābhārata*: A tale about Women, Smelly Ascetics, and Gods , *Journal of American Academy of Religion*, March 2004, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp. 33-58.
- 31 *Mahābhārata*, I.98.1-5. Parasurama, incensed at the assassination of his father, killed in his fury the king of Haihayas and taking up his bow and unleashing his mighty missiles, he burned down the kshatriyas time and again. Then the kshatriya women cohabited with the Brahmins to reproduce sons and save kshatriya lineage.
- 32 Ibid, V.115 ff
- 33 Shalini Shah calls her a 'womb on rent'. Cf. 'Patriarchy and Property in the *Mahabharata*', *Social Science Probing*, Vol. 6, Numbers 1-4, January-December 1989, pp. 10-18.
- 34 *Mahabharata*, I.III.85-90.
- 35 Ibid, I.78.32.
- 36 *Mahābhārata*, I. 206.1-30. VI. 90
- 37 Arti Dhand, *Women as Fire, Women as Sage*, New York State University Press, p. 190.

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- 38 Cited in Ganganath Jha ed. *Manusmṛti* with Medhatithi's *Manaubhāṣya*, Vol. X, p. 710.
- 39 *Manaubhāṣya*, op cit, III.5
- 40 *Manaubhāṣya*, ed. Ganganath Jha, 2nd edition, Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1999, Vol. 4, p. 28.
- 41 Narayana Ram Acharya ed., *Nirnaya Sindhu*, Nirnaya Sagar, Mudranalayam, Mumbai, 1947, p. 221. [available at Deccan College, Sanskrit Dictionary Scriptorium Libraray], Pune.
- 42 Mitramisra, *Vīramitrōdaya*, Sansarprakasha, Chowkhamba series, Vol. I, Varanasi, 1987, p. 825.
- 43 Mahābhārata, XIII.44.14.

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# Representation of the Animal World in the Narrative Art of Amarāvatī

SREYASHI RAY CHOWDHURI

Andhra Pradesh became a rich repository of art objects in the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era. The entire region from Śālihundi (District Srikakulam) to Kanuparti (District Guntūr) and from Gooty (District Anantapūr) to Bhāttiprolu (District Guntūr) near the mouth of Kṛṣṇa in the east witnessed the emergence of magnificent art centres. It had its richest manifestation in the art centres of Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakonda, Jaggayyapēṭa, Ghāntaśālā, Allūru, Gummādīdurru, Goli and Bhāttiprolu.

Among these centres, Amarāvatī (Lat 16°34'N Long 80°21'E District Guntūr) ancient Dhānyakaṭaka, became the most flourishing Buddhist centre. After a period of initial experiments, the art reached its grandeur, elegance and glory during the regime of the later Śātavāhanas (2nd century CE). In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the various animal sculptures of Amarāvatī and ascertain its importance in the religious life and art of Andhradeśa.

The Amarāvatī Mahāchaitya bear innumerable reliefs with superb expressiveness. Executed in pale greenish Palnad limestone (raw material bearing area), the teeming compositions of Amarāvatī with slender but passionate figures narrate the stories of Buddha's life and the life of his former incarnations. To serve this purpose human as well as animal figures share the same lithic canvas. In addition to it animals also serve as religious symbols and decorative motifs. Infact it may be stated that Amarāvatī art is represented as a total whole where man and animal live in peaceful harmony along with the vegetal world.

The animal world as rendered at Amarāvatī can be broadly categorised into mythical and true animals. The mythical animals are called *īhāmṛgas* or *Vyālas* (Krishna Murthy. K 1985 PP 1-4) and are visualised in zoomorphic juncture. Krishna Murthy states that the term *īhāmṛgas* is derived from a compound of two words—*īhānusāri mṛgah* or *Ihamanusrstya krito mṛgah*, that is, animals carved according to the imagination of the sculptor. From the Gupta period instead of *īhāmṛga* the word *vyāla* came into frequent use. Actually the term refers to the convention of depicting the body of a large animal by combining parts of another animal. This variety can further be sub-divided into aerial (*vymacārin*) terrestrial (*bhūcārin*) and aquatic types (*jalacārin*) by embellishing it with certain body parts which distinguish animals of each region. For example beasts with wings, aquatic monsters with fish like hind quarters and animals with beak but without wings distinguish mythical creatures into aerial, aquatic and terrestrial type. Such depiction was not only common at Amarāvatī but also viewed at Bhārhut, Sāñchī Jaggayyapēṭa and Nāgārjunakonda. *īhāmṛgas* often adorned the early structures as architectural motifs. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Vidurapanḍita Jātaka* have reference to such mythical creatures.

Among the mythical variety mythical lion at Amarāvatī evokes great interest. It is of five types namely : (i) Lion with wings (*sapakshasimhah*); (ii) lion with beak and wings; (iii) Lion with beak alone; (iv) Lion with horns and (v) Lion with *makara* body.

The first variety may be seen in a fragment of the railing coping at Amarāvatī depicting a lion with raised left paw. The lion's scaly and feathered wings curls behind his mane (Knox Robert : 1992, p 91, cat no. 34). Here the artist had rendered his idea of a standing winged lion with its full weight on earth in remarkable clarity. Behind the animal a youth is seen holding his tail. Similar to this example a fragment from Nāgārjunakonda depicts a winged lion over the *Pūrnaghāṭa* (Krishna Murthy K. : 1977 P-249, Fig. XV 16). Parallel representations of winged lions are also found in Persian sculptures.

The second type, that is animal with a beak and leonine body is generally associated with the griffin with or without wings. At Amarāvatī the borders of a central lotus medallion of a rail show a lion with beak and wings with a variety of other animals intermingled with rich foliage patterns. (Sivaramamurti C. : 1956 pl XL Fig. 1). A lion gryphon from Bactria (4th century BCE) bear some similarity to the Andhra example. (Dalton O.M. : 1926 2nd Edition P-49 Fig. 194) .

Lion with a beak is found on the dome slab containing a row of *triratnas*. Below it a row of three maned lions are carved running to the left. Here the second lion is of the beaked category. Beaked lions also occur in the panels depicting the *Mahāpaduma Jātaka* and *Ghaṭa Jātaka* at Nāgārjunakonda (Longhurst A.H. : Reprinted 1991-P1 XLV-b). Similar examples are also seen at SāĀcī (Grundwedel A. : Reprinted 2000 p-49, Fig. 25) but with a slightly different rump.

Regarding the representations of horned lions at Amarāvatī mention may be made of a small fragment of the rail pillar. Here the upper border of the outer face of a rail pillar depicts a stūpa with umbrellas emanating from the *harmikā* worshipped by elephants with lotus and a winged horned lion (Knox Robert 1992, pp 52-3, cat no. 7)

The lion's raised foot and the entangled tail gives a sense of realism and vitality to the entire composition. In another example from Amarāvatī a horned lion is found on a casing slab eating grass from the hand of a dwarf. Regarding this depiction we may highlight Sivaramamurti's observation. He describes the horned lion as a meek creature imbibing gentle spirit from an antelope and a deer (Sivaramamurti C. Reprinted 1956 p. 93 XIX Fig. 2). Here it may be stated that apart from this depiction we cannot ignore the vivacity and dynamism of horned lions in other examples. Horned lions also appear in the panel illustrating *Ghaṭa Jātaka* at Nāgārjunakonda (Longhurst A.H. : Reprinted 1991, P 53, P1 XLVI a). Here the lions are depicted in a ferocious manner. Similar treatment can be visualised at Sāñchī.

Lion with a *makara* body can be seen in few specimens of sculpture from Amarāvatī.

## Representation of the Animal World in the Narrative Art of Amarāvatī

A small lower fragment of a rail pillar with a half lotus contains horned lion with a *makara* body as its lower frieze. The lower border contains a group of five *makaras* with horned lion head (Knox Robert : 1992, pp 45-6, Fig. 3). Similar examples are found at Nāgārjunakonda. The panel illustrating ‘the gift of earth’ represents a lady in *dohada* with a lion and a *makara* as her mount (Longhurst A.H. : Reprinted 1991 pp 37-9 pl XXXV-b).

Among the second group of mythical creatures mention may be made of the elephantine monsters. This variety comprised elephant with wings and elephant with fish tail. Elephant with hindquarters of a fish is found at Amarāvatī. This type may be identified as *Gajavaktra Jhasas* mentioned in the Mahābhārata (iii, 173, 50) and *Mātānganakra* by Kālidāsa (Raghuvarṇa, xiii, 11). Vālmīki in *Rāmāyaṇa* often compares the entire military army to a large river or ocean full of fishes and crocodiles in the form of elephants and horses (*Rāmāyaṇa* vi 94, 11). Coomaraswamy notices the similarity between *Gajavaktra Jhasas* and *Jalebha* (Coomaraswamy A.K. : 1993, P-145). A small square slab with Buddhapāda in low relief bear the figure of a mythical elephant. The footprints are bordered with lotus blossoms and buds along with twisting stems emanating from the mouth of a *Makara* with elephant trunk and scaly curling tail (Knox Robert : 1992, pp 211-2, cat No. 120). An outer rail pillar from Amarāvatī again shows the elephant with a fish tail.

Next category of mythical animals belong to the equine type. It is usually of two kinds, namely horse with wings and horse with fish tail. Though the first variety is found at Amarāvatī, horse with fish tail is absent.

According to Sivaramamurti the idea of winged horse was probably borrowed from the hindu concept of celestial horse *Uccaisravas*. In addition to it Buddhist *Jātakas* like *Valahassa Jātaka* (Cowell E.B. : Reprinted 1994 vol. II No. 196 P-90) and *Vidurapāṇḍita Jātaka* (Cowell E.B. : Reprinted 1994 vol. IV No. 545 pp 134-5) have references to the winged horse. Exterior band on the circumference of one of the panels of the outer rail depict running pattern of lotuses and animals alternately. Here prancing winged steed and flying pigeons are visible throbbing with life (Rea Alexr : 1969 Pl. XXXVIII Fig. 2). There is reference of winged horse named Pegasus in Greek mythology. A silver coin of 4th century BCE from Corinth bear the image of the winged horse Pegasus (Carson R.A.G. : 1977 Pl. 5, 91, 92).

Winged deer is also found at Amarāvatī reliefs. An example of this variety is found in the relief of the rail bar depicting playful frolic of a gana or dwarf with a bull and winged deer (Plate-1) .

*Makara* is another type of *īhāmṛga* often represented in Indian art. *Makara* derived its inspiration from crocodile and fish. *Makara* is usually seen with crocodile head and body of the fish with scales, tail and fins. In the early reliefs of Amarāvatī *Makara* is conceived partly as a crocodile and partly as a fish. Later the creature is beautifully ornamented with scales and fins. In a coping from Amarāvatī a garland issues from the mouth of a *Makara*.

and is carried by a dwarf *Yakṣa* (Burgess J. : 1887, Pl XXVIII 6). A woman is also seen. *Makara* motif is also represented in some of the railing pillars at Amarāvatī. The outer face of the railing pillar depicts scaly *Makaras* on the lower border of a half lotus roundel. Stylised vegetal motifs comprising leaves, lotus buds and flowers with undulating vines emanates from the mouth of the *Makara* (Knox Robert : 1992, pp 211-2, cat No. 13 outer face of the railing pillar).

Figure of the merman is also found at Amarāvatī. Merman is generally therioanthropomorphic figure of half man and half fish or half man and half snake. It reminds one of the *Matsyāvatāra* of Viṣṇu who is sometimes depicted as a fish and sometimes as a merman. Similar representation is found in Greek mythology where Erechthius is half man and half snake. In the illustration of the *Khadirāṅgara Jātaka* at Amarāvatī Māra emerges from the mouth of a multi hooded snake (Subrahmanyam B. : 2005 Pl. 24).

With regard to the depiction of the mythical animals it may be stated that these hybrid creatures present an unmistakable foreign connection. These foreign influences percolated into Indian art through trade contracts that India had with the foreign countries in the early centuries of the Christian era. Moreover Indian art have always progressed and flourished by assimilating indigenous features with foreign elements. Similar tendency can be seen in the case of representation of *Īhāmṛgas* at Amarāvatī.

Apart from the mythical creatures, a number of animals in their true form were conceived and represented in the art of Amarāvatī. Animals like lions, bulls, elephants, horses, deer, boars, jackals, hares, monkeys, goats, buffaloes, rams, serpents and birds of different form and variety are visible in the narratives of Amarāvatī. It is striking to note that the lions, bulls, elephants, and horses are in a way associated with Gautama Buddha and thus represented in almost all the sites of Buddhist art. Amaravati was no exception to this general pattern. Here it may be stated that while the master had been conspicuously described as *Śākyasimha* in the Buddhist text, his nativity is said to have taken place under the zodiac sign of vṛṣa (bull). Buddha is further said to have entered the womb of his mother in the form of a white elephant in her dream. The galloping horse is reminiscent of Siddhartha's favourite steed *Kaṇṭhaka*, symbolising the great renunciation (*Mahābhīniskramana*).

Regarding the representation of real animals mention may be made of lions from Amarāvatī. Few examples of the central roundel of the railing pillar with lower fluted area and lower half lotus on both the faces illustrates figures of lions. In one such example the inner face of the bottom of a pillar is decorated by a band containing a pair of *makaras*. At the centre of the band is a male figure flanked by a pair of lions, one with a mane and one without. On the outer face, the border of the central lotus contains a running lion, a *makara* and a rabbit. Lions also occur in the ornamentation of the drum slab. Two pairs of lions are seen on both sides of the slab. The lions are seen with elegant mane, big and staring

eyes and mouth slightly open to show the teeth. Although naturalistic representation of the animal can be visible in the tense muscular development, one cannot ignore the feeling for stylisation (Knox Robert 1992, cat No. 70). Lion is also depicted in the panel illustrating the *Chaddanta Jātaka* (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 P-55 Pl. 11, 11a). Similarly at Nāgārjunakonda a meticulous delineation of the lion is seen in a relief illustrating the *Śāśa Jātaka* (stone Elizabeth Rosen 1994 P 50 Pl 106). At Goli a lion is visible in the *Vessantara Jātaka* panel.

Apart from lions, elephants also appear to be a favourite subject to the Amarāvatī sculptors. The animal is carved in all possible postures and movements. In the panels narrating *Chaddanta Jātaka*, *Silvanāga Jātaka*, *Losaka Jātaka*, *Mahilāmukha Jātaka*, (Plate-II) and *Vessantara Jātaka* the animal displays a much developed sense of form. The plastic volume and the feeling for living flesh is present in almost all the examples of elephant from Amarāvatī. The panels at Goli representing the *Vessantara Jātaka*, *Mātiposaka Jātaka*, and *Chaddanta Jātaka*, though depict the animal realistically but its linear rhythm is less developed than those sculpted at Amarāvatī. A beautiful example of an elephant in bust is obtained from the limestone roundel of the railing at Phanigiri (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 Pl. 48). Elephant in low relief is also seen in the panel illustrating the *Mandhāta Jātaka* at Jaggayyapēta. It suffers from rigidity unknown at Amarāvatī. Like Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakonda elephants also show naturalistic modeling. Panels illustrating the subjugation of the elephant Nalagiri and Bodhisattva descending from heaven in the form of an elephant are praiseworthy (Stone Elizabeth Rosen 1994 Pl. 262). At Amarāvatī several elephant figures are found on the railing coping. One such relief shows a pair of elephant with garlands in their trunk bowing before the *stūpa*. Some elephants are also visible on the border of the rail pillar. The upper border of the outer face of a railing at Amarāvatī depicts a *stūpa* worshipped by winged lions and elephants bearing lotuses in their trunk (Knox Robert 1992, P-52 cat No. 7 outer face).

Next to the elephants, the horses carved in the various reliefs at Amarāvatī attract attention. Horse appears in the *Kavikumāravadana* (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 PI-48) and *Silvanāga Jātaka* at Amarāvatī (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 P-66 Pl. 16) Horse is also seen on the central medallion of a narrative pillar at Amarāvatī. Here the scene of Great Departure is illustrated. The central medallion focuses upon turbaned prince Siddhārtha riding his horse *Kanṭhaka* whose hooves are supported by gods. The energy of the rider and the animal seen here needs special mention (Dehejia vidya 1997, p-157 Fig. 134). Several examples of standing and galloping horse *Kanṭhaka* occur at Nāgārjunakonda. The relief illustrating the renunciation and *Chandaka's nivedana* about Siddhārtha's *abhiniṣkramaṇa* reveal caparisoned horses (Longhurst A.H. Reprinted 1991 pl XXIb, XXVIIIc, XXXb). Though the depiction of horse of Bharhut is comparatively rare but the rendering of the animal is profuse at Sāñcī, Mathura and Gandhāra. Amaravati artists also showed considerable skill in

modeling other quadrupeds like bulls, buffaloes rams, jackals, hares, bears, boars, monkeys, deer, reptiles like serpents and birds like peacock, geese (*hamsas*) dove etc., These creatures are sometimes seen in the frieze borders and sometimes in the narrative scenes. In the foreground of the narrative panel of *Śuśa Jātaka* at Amarāvatī the royal hare and the jackal are seen. However, the same scene at Nāgārjunakonda also depicts a monkey, an otter, a pair of antelopes and a lion along with the hare and the jackal in the sacrificial scene. The monoscopic narrative of the *Ahigundika Jātaka* at Amarāvatī shows king Brahmadatta of Benaras enjoying the performance of the snake charmer and his monkey (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 pp 77-9 Pl. 22). In the scene from *Vessantara Jātaka* at the same site bulls and bullock cart are seen. The representation of goat in the *Matakabhatta Jātaka* is found on the dome panel at Amarāvatī (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 P-93 Pl. 28, 28A.). But B. Subrahmanyam suggests that the animal looks more like a ram rather than a goat with its head down. Jumping deer in the *Mahāpaduma Jātaka* appear on the coping fragment at Amarāvatī. The cross bar roundel depicting *Chaddanta Jātaka* at Amarāvatī in seven scenes represents wild animals like bear, lion and deer besides the elephant chaddanta. It can be surmised that the realistic depiction of bear, lion, and deer drinking water from the lake is an obvious attempt by the artist to create a forest environment as a backdrop for the story. Buffaloes, deer, boars, ram, elephants, and lions also occur on the frieze borders.

Regarding the depiction of birds at Amarāvatī mention may be made of the *Mahāhamisa Jātaka* carved on the dome panel. Here a long necked goose on the extreme right side of the panel is visible (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 P 53 Pl. 10, 10a.). A broken rail pillar at Amarāvatī having a circular medallion illustrates the *Mora Jātaka*. A beautiful carving of a peacock is found here (Burgess J. 1887, Pl XV Fig. 2). Dove appears on the limestone frieze illustrating the *Śibi Jātaka*.

Serpent worship was popular in India and thus serpents were frequently sculpted in early Indian art. *Nāgas* are usually represented in three ways—human being with hoods over his head, half snake with coils from his waist (merman) and purely as snakes. Innumerable examples of *nāgas* are found at Amarāvatī. The first type is visible in the frieze illustrating the *Samkhapāla Jātaka* now preserved in the British Museum. The second type is already mentioned in the category of mythical animals. The third type is found in the panel of *Campeyya Jātaka* (Subrahmanyam B. 2005 p. 42, Pl. 5) where a multihooded *nāga* is visible. *Nāgas* sometime adorned the drum slab. In one such specimen from Amarāvatī a five hooded coiling snake (Knox Robert 1992, P 144) is found on the face of an *āyaka* platform.

Taking into consideration the different reliefs at Amarāvatī it may be suggested that the artists have meticulously carved the animal world. The animals are well conceived and excellently executed. The different movement of the animals gives a sense of dynamism to the subject and brings them close to reality. However, with the exception of the mythical

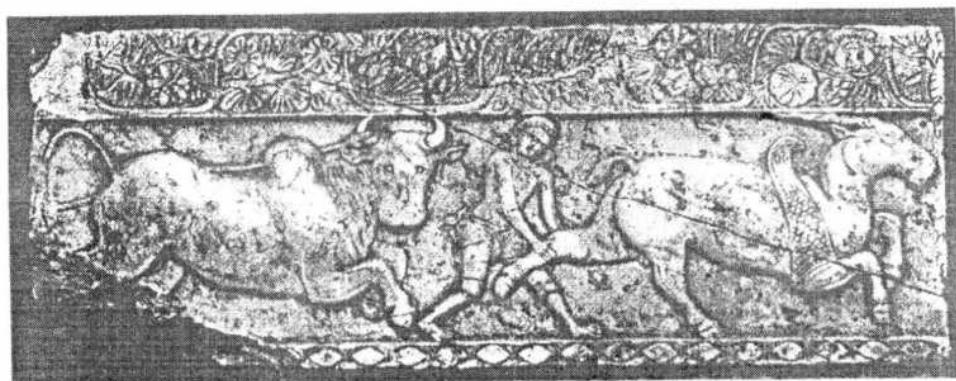
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animals it must be noted that the majority of the creatures illustrated in the narratives are identical with animals found in the surrounding. Hence the artists were able to observe the subject at close proximity and render it impeccably in the sculptures. Thus a variety of animals in the geographical surrounding along with the religious purpose and decorative requirement of the *stūpas* inspired the sculptors to chisel out the animal world at Amarāvatī.

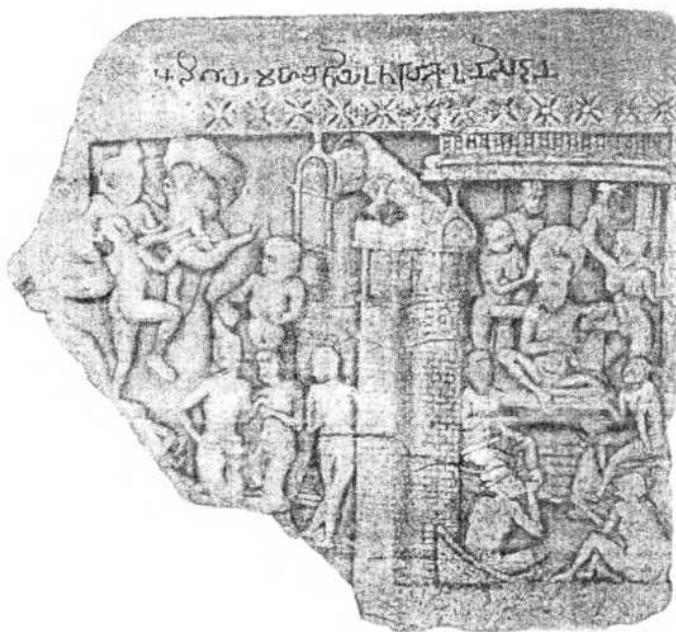
The representation of the above repertoire of animals in the Amarāvatī sculptures may be a pan Indian characteristic so far as early Indian sculptural practices are concerned. The question arises whether all these can be treated as a part of the evolving pattern of the iconoplasic art traditions guided by the Buddhist philosophy and tradition? It may be postulated that the craftsmen of Amarāvatī could explore their creativity to justify the above religious need.

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**Plate I** - Relief from Amarāvatī depicting a winged deer.  
Courtesy: Chintamoni Kar, *Classical Indian Sculpture*, Pl. 72, Kolkata, 2003.



**Plate II** - Depiction of elephant in Mahilāmukha Jātaka.  
Courtesy: B. Subrahmanyam, *Jatakas in South Indian Art*, Pl. 36, Delhi, 2005.

## Conch on Early Indian Coins

SAMARESH BANDYOPADHYAY

Early Indian coins, if not dated, being mostly dateable to a tolerable degree of certainty reflects best the contemporary life. Interestingly enough, in course of our study of early Indian coins during the last five decades, we have come across a huge number of coins, indigenous and foreign, bearing the representation of objects used daily throughout the country from time immemorial, for religious rituals or different other purposes. In the following few lines an attempt will be made to draw attention to the depiction of conch on early Indian coins.

Conch (*śankha*), included in the list of musical instruments in early Indian literary texts like the *Mahābhāṣya*<sup>1</sup> of Patañjali, etc., is a wind-type of instrument found to be used in India from very early times<sup>2</sup> and its depiction is noticeable on many early Indian coins like the punch-marked coins<sup>3</sup>, coins of the Yaudheyas<sup>4</sup>, Guptas, etc.

A gold coin, preserved in the Indian Museum, of the Elephant, Rider Type of Kumāragupta I (474-455 A.D.) bears the representation of a 'vase or shell', according to V. A. Smith,<sup>5</sup> by the side of the female figure on the reverse. Though while describing the same coin, J. Allan<sup>6</sup> took the thing as an 'uncertain object' (vase ?); a few coins of the same type from the Bayana Hoard led A. S. Altekar not only to describe unhesitatingly the object as conch, but also to notice that it is a 'quite novel feature'. In his discussion on the significance of the same type of coins, S. V. Sohonil<sup>8</sup>, following Altekar, also described the object as conch. The object was also taken as conch by Ajit Ghose<sup>9</sup> while describing the sixth known specimen of this rare type. It has been taken as conch by O. P. Singh<sup>10</sup> also, though he does not make any reference to Altekar's identification of the object, made at least 20 years earlier, nor has he referred to the writings of Sohoni and Ghose. Though in one place of his work entitled *Early Coins of North India—An Iconographic Study* (New Delhi, 1984), S. S. Singh follows<sup>11</sup> Allan to describe the object, in certain other places of the same work<sup>12</sup> he, following Altekar and Ghose, takes the object as conch.

An exquisitely beautiful representation of conch by the side of the up right elbow of seated female figure is also noticeable on the reverse of a gold coin of the Archer Type of the same king Kumāragupta I.<sup>13</sup> No reference to this coin depicting conch has been made by S. S. Singh.

Even before Kumāragupta I, conch is found to form a part of the reverse device of the Gupta coins, as is evident from its depiction on the reverse of the so-called Cakravikrama Type of gold coins of Candragupta II (c. 376-414 A.D.). The conch appears on the reverse of this coin-type<sup>14</sup>. The popularity of the practice of representing Lakṣmī with conch in her

hand or placed by her side in the Gupta period is also evident from seals from Bhita and Basarh<sup>15</sup>.

The conch is also seen to be depicted on some coins of the Ephthalites.<sup>16</sup>

On South Indian coins also the conch is found to be represented well and it is interesting to draw attention of scholars at first to the depiction of conch on the obverse of some round potin coins<sup>17</sup> of Gautamiputra Sātakarnī (c. 106-130 A. D.) of the Sātavāhana dynasty and also on at least two types<sup>18</sup> of round lead coins of the Sātavāhana king Yajña Sātakarnī (c. 174-202 A.D.).

The popularity of conch as a device on South Indian coins is amply borne out by the fact that, besides the Sātavāhana coins referred to above, it has been found to be depicted on the coins of a large number of dynasties issuing coins. Besides the coins, depicting conch, of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins, Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas, Yādavas of Devagiri and rulers of Travancore, mentioned by B. N. Mukherjee in his article, referred to above, as we may point out, it has been found to be represented on many other dynasties of South India like the Eastern Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa, Later Cālukyas, Kadambas of Hangal, Colas, Hoysalas, Ālupas, etc.

Two copper coins<sup>19</sup> of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins are known to depict conch, the first showing on the obverse a 'standing bull to right' and on the reverse 'within a rayed circle a conch or a vase with a lamp stand on either side' and the second on the obverse 'within a circle, lion to right with the forepaw raised and tail uplifted' and on the reverse 'a conch-shell within the usual radiating circle'.

The conch is shown within a rayed circle on the reverse of a type of Pallava copper coins.<sup>20</sup>

On the obverse of a variety of the 'Bull and Fish Type' of copper coins of the Pāṇḍyas,<sup>21</sup> the conch is depicted over the back of the bull.

The Variety b<sup>22</sup> of Type T of the much alloyed gold coin of the Cola king Rājarāja (985-1016 A.D) is unique since this is the only coin noticed so far to depict on its obverse conch being blown by a standing crude figure holding the conch in his left hand and a lamp in his right hand. There are an arrow and crescent to his right and four pellets to his left. The coin is also interesting since on its reverse also a conch is depicted being placed in the left hand of a seated crude figure along with the legend in Nāgarī Rājarāja.

Certain silver coins of the rulers of Travancore<sup>23</sup> bear the representation of a conch on the obverse, as also referred to by B. N. Mukherjee.<sup>24</sup>

The conch appears on the reverse of a variety of copper coins,<sup>25</sup> assigned to the Eastern Cālukyas on the basis of the depiction of boar on the obverse.

The reverse of some coins of the Cālukyas,<sup>26</sup> of Kalyāṇa depict conch.<sup>26</sup>

On the obverse of a type of gold coins of the Later Cālukyas,<sup>27</sup> there is the representations of a conch.

## Conch on Early Indian Coins

A type of gold coins<sup>28</sup> of the Kadambas of Hangal has on the obverse a conch. Certain other Cola coins also bear the representation of conch.<sup>29</sup>

A type of gold coins<sup>28</sup> of the Hoysala king Viṣṇuvardhana (c. 1108-1142 A.D.) shows on one side within linear border a goddess on the back of a maned lion, mainly represented by pellets to right, wearing crown and holding conch in right and discus in left hand and on the other side the Kanarese legend *Śrī Nonambavāddigondah*. The representation of conch is also met with on a gold coin type of the Hoysala king Narasimha (c. 1142-1173 A.D.) having the same device as on the coin of Viṣṇuvardhana on one side and the Kanarese legend *Śrī Pratāpanārāyaṇa Pratāpanarasimha* on the other.

All the three types of coins<sup>31</sup> of the Yādavas of Devagiri depicting conch on the obverse are of gold. They belong to Bhillama IV(c. 1175-1191 A.D.), Siṅghana (c. 1200-1247 A.D.) and Kṛṣṇa (c. 1247-1260 A.D.).

Two types of gold coins<sup>32</sup> of the Ālupas having the Kanarese legend *Śrī Pāṇḍya Dhananjaya* on one side depict on the other side the conch.

The gold coins<sup>33</sup> bearing on one side the legend *Śrī Lakṣmī* in Nāgarī characters and *Śrī* in conventionalised Telugu-Kanarese script depict a conch at the bottom.<sup>34</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Ed. Keilhorn, 11. 2. 34 (p. 435, line 11).
- 2 Krishnamurthy's *Archaeology of Indian Musical Instruments*, Delhi, 1985, pp. 5-7 for its mention in other early texts and pp. 64-67 of the same work for its archaeological representations.
- 3 Cf. *Studies in Archaeology*, ed. Asok Datta, New Delhi, 1991, p. 285.
- 4 A. Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India from the earliest times down to the Seventh Century A.D.*, London, 1891 (Reprint, Varanasi, 1963), p. 78 and Plate VI. 8. V.A. Smith *op. cit.*, p. 183 and Plate XXI. 20; S.K. Chakraborty, *A Study of Ancient Indian Numismatics*, 1931, (Reprint, Delhi, 1993), p. 224; J. Allan, *A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum*, London, 1936, pp. 211 and 278 and Plate XL. 7-8. B. Lahiri in *Lakṣmī and Sarusvati in Art and Literature*, ed. D.C. Sircar, University of Calcutta, 1970, p. 129; cf. also her work *Indigenous States of Northern India*, University of Calcutta, 1974, pp. 212-398 and Plate V. 12; K.K. Dasgupta, *A Tribal History of Ancient India—A Numismatic Approach*, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 210-223 and Plate VIII. 130. While writing on 'vase' symbol on the coins of the Yaudheyas, Dasgupta (*ibid.*, p. 123) wrongly states that it occurs 'also on Yaudheya coins with tri' (sic), though vase is actually found on coins with the legend *dvi* as he himself has noticed (pp. 210, 223). K.D. Bajpai (*Indian Numismatic Studies* New Delhi, 1976, p. 35 and Plate IV. I-10) has, however, published some new coins bearing conch on them. Cf. also O.P. Singh (in *Seminar-papers on the Tribal Coins of Ancient India*, ed. J.P. Singh and

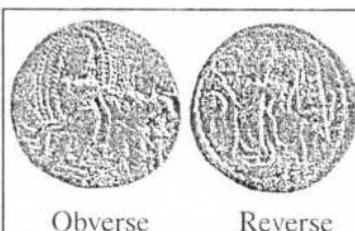
N. Ahmad, Varanasi, 1977, p. 111. and *his Religion and Iconography on Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, p. 101. Cf. also J.P. Singh in *Seminar Papers on the Tribal Coins of Ancient India*, ed. J.P. Singh and N. Ahmad, Varanasi, 1977, pp. 132, 135. No reference to Bajpai's coins has been made either by O. P. Singh or by J.P. Singh. According to Sm. S. Gokhale (cf. *Coinage of the Sātavāhanas and Coins from Excavations*, ed. A. Mitra Shastri, Nagpur University, 1972, p. 35), conch is also found on the coins of the Kuṇindas and Mālavas, though she has not cited any evidence, and in the elaborate treatment of the coins of the Kuṇindas and Mālavas by K. K. Dasgupta (*op. cit.*, pp. 88 and pp. 109-139) no reference to coins depicting conch is found. Two Kuninda coins illustrated by Allan (*A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum*, London, 1936, Plate XLIII. 12 and 14), however, appear to bear the representation of conch above the back of the deer either to left or to right. B.N. Mukherjee's article 'Musical Instruments on Indian coins' (*Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. XLVIII, Parts I-It, pp. 121-122) does not contain any reference to the depiction of conch on the coins of the Yaudheyas, Guptas and the Sātavāhanas, referred to here and below.

- 5 *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, Vol. I., p. 115 and Plate XVI. 7.
- 6 *A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum—Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śasāṅka, King of Gauḍa*, London, 1914, p. 88 and Plate XV.16.
- 7 *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, Bombay, 1954, p. CIX
- 8 *Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. XIX, p. 192.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXII, p. 182.
- 10 *Religion and Iconography on Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, p. 22.
- 11 *Op.cit.*, p. 164.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 167 and 181.
- 13 *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Varanasi, 1957, pp. 168, 172 and Plate X. 5.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 146 and Plate IX. 8-9; *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, Bombay, 1954, p. 208 and Plate XVIII. 14; *Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. XXII, p. 262; Samarendra Bandyopadhyay in *Foreign Elements in Indian Indigenous Coins*, ed. Ajay Mitra Shastri, Varanasi, 1982, p. 154.
- 15 Cf. S. S. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 167.
- 16 A. Cunningham, *Later Indo-Scythians*, Varanasi, 1962, Plate VII. 5, 6 and 8; cf. also B. N. Mukherjee's article referred to above. According to Mukherjee, "on a variety of coins of the Indo-Greek king Agathocles a deity (Vasudeva) is probably represented as holding inter (sic) alia a conch" (*see Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 74-77 and Plate VIIA)
- 17 E. J. Rapson (*Catalogue of the Coins of the Andhra Dynasty, The Western Ksatrapas, The Traikutaka Dynasty and the Bodhi Dynasty*, London, 1908, p. 17 and Plate IV. 59); D. C. Sircar (*op.cit.*, p. 358 and Plate V. 3). Both Rapson and following him Sircar appear to be in doubt as regards the representation of conch on the coins as is evident from the query mark they put, but P. L. Gupta (*Coinage of the Sātavahanas and Coins from Excavations*, ed. A. Mitra Shastri, Nagpur University, 1972, p. 44) draws our attention to a coin of this variety in copper which bears conch:

- 18 For the peaked-hill type of coins depicting conch of Yajña Sātakarṇi, see E.J. Rapson (*Catalogue of the Coins of the Andhra Dynasty*, etc pp. clxx vi, 34 and Plate VI. 132-133. S. Gokhale (*Coinage of the Sātavāhanas and Coins from Excavations*, ed. A. Mitra Shastry, Nagpur University, 1972, p. 35 and note 73) has referred to coin no. 132, of Rapson's Catalogue; cf. also P. L. Gupta in *ibid.*, p. 55 and note 98 and K. Sharma in *ibid.*, p. 97. Gupta has rightly mentioned that Rapson published two such coins, but in referring to the numbers of coins he has made a mistake by mentioning 'coins 133-134' in place of Coin nos. 132-133. For the ship type coin showing conch of the same king, see V. V. Mirashi in *Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. 111, p. 43 and S. B. Deo in *ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, 1962, pp. 174-175.
- 19 B.D. Chattpadhyaya, *op.cit.*, pp. 193 and 195. Both are copper coins, the first showing on the obverse a 'standing bull to right' and on the reverse 'within a rayed circle a conch or a vase with a lamp stand on either side' and the second on the obverse 'within a circle, lion to right with the forepaw raised and tail uplifted' and on the reverse "a conch-shell within the usual radiating circle'.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 199. On both the copper coins the conch is shown on the reverse within a rayed circle. On the second one the conch is placed on a pedestal.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 264.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 243. and Plate IV. 195.
- 23 J. Allan, *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, Vol. IV, Oxford, 1928, p. 146 and Plate VIII. 4. Cf. also *Journ. Num. Soc. Ind.*, Vol. XLVIII, Parts 1-11, pp. 121-122.
- 24 See note 4 above.
- 25 B.D. Chattpadhyaya, *op.cit.*, p. 209. It is a copper coin showing on the obverse a boar to right, sun and crescent above and on the reverse most probably a conch.
- 26 A.V. Narasimha Murthy (*op. cit.*, p. 83) states that this gold coin belonging to the Kodur has on the reverse the representation of a conch along with some other symbols and on the obverse the legend *Jagadeka* with other things.
- 27 B.D. Chattpadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217 and Plate 111.108. It is a gold coin depicting conch on the obverse.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 225. It is a gold coin having on the obverse 'within triple border of lines and dots', crowned Hanuman seated to front, flanked by two chowries, surmounted by a conch; above, moon to left, sun to right, below, legend in Kanarese *Nakara* and on the reverse scroll design.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281 and Plate VII. 337-338. Both the coins are of gold and on the reverse of the first a seated figure of Narasimha in *padmāsana*, facing, with discus in right hand and conch in left, while on the reverse of the second coin there is a four-armed goddess wearing *kirīṭa*, bracelets and anklets holding discus in right hand and conch in left.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 285 and 287. Cf. also A. V. Narasimha Murthy, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-1 12.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 290, 292 and Plate VIII. 363 and 369. On the obverse of both these gold coins conch is depicted. *Ibid.*, p. 302.



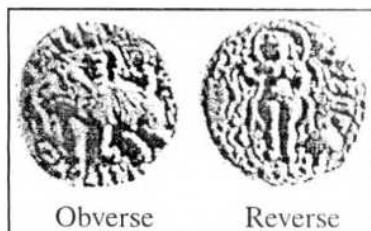
Reverse only



Cakravikrama Type of Gold  
Coins of Candragupta II

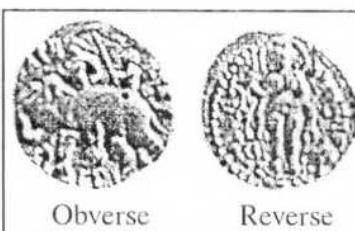


Archer Type of Gold  
Coins of Kumāragupta I



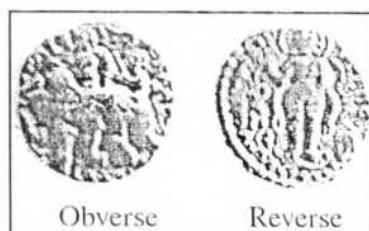
Obverse

Reverse



Obverse

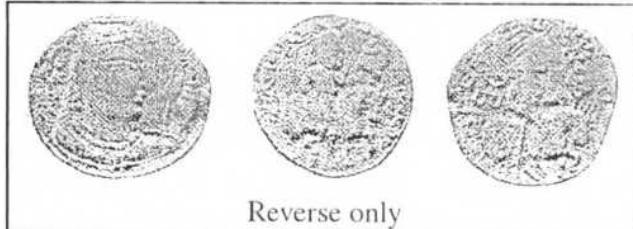
Reverse



Obverse

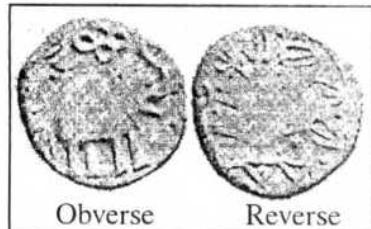
Reverse

Elephant–Rider Type of Gold Coins of Kumāragupta I



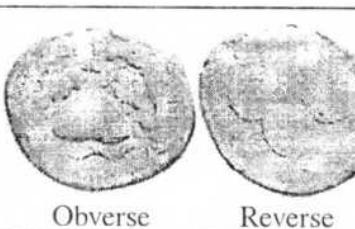
Reverse only

Coins of the Ephthalites



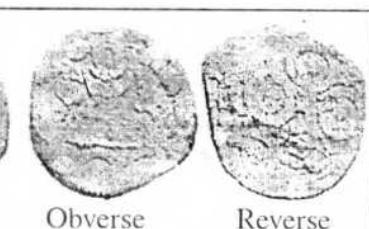
Obverse

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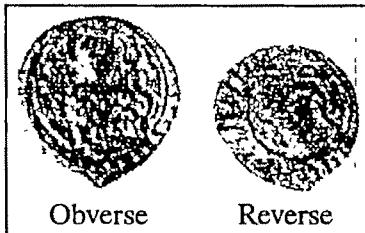
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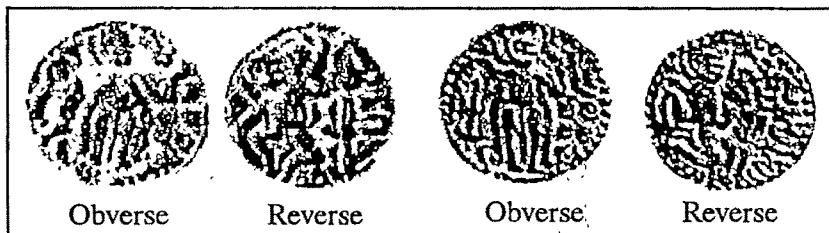
Potin Coin of  
Gautamiputra  
Sātakarṇi

Lead Coins of  
Yajña Sātakarṇi

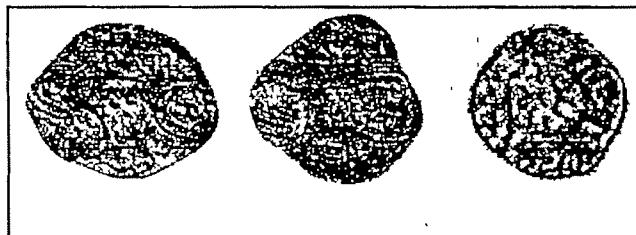
**Conch on Early Indian Coins**



**Coins of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins**



**Coins of Rājarāja**



**Obverse only  
Coins of  
Bhillama**

**Obverse only  
Coins of  
Singhana**

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# Movements and Migration of *Brāhmaṇas* in the Srikakulam–Vizianagaram–Vishakhapatnam Region from Epigraphic Evidence (6th–10th century CE.)

SABARNI PRAMANIK NAYAK

Early-medieval epigraphs sometimes record the name of the dwelling place of grantee (or his ancestors) along with the location of the village or land donated to him. As the donees were predominantly *brāhmaṇas*, from those charters we can have an idea about their range of movements and migration. While migration implies the permanent change of residence by an individual or group, the term ‘movements’ only implies an act of moving from one place to another. Interestingly, all the land-grant charters mentioning the residence of the donee and the granted village or land to him does not prove the factor of migration while some of the plates indicates only the movements of the donee *brāhmaṇas*.

Ramendra Nath Nandi has mentioned the factors like the decay of towns, the urge to obtain dynastic patronage, loss of charter, non-confirmation of the older grants, disputes between different groups of freeholders coming from different places and belonging to different Vedic schools of learning and finally, the insubordination of the ryots in the donated freeholdings among the causes of migration (Nandi 1986: 40-4). Swati Datta added the causes like political unrest accompanied by the need for security, royal oppressions, famines and religious causes to it (Datta 1989: 97-113). However, the charters issued in the 6th-10th century Andhra region have not clearly stated any of these reasons while the eagerness to get royal favour and the patronage offered by the rulers might be two common causes which were noticed all over India also.

In the case of Srikakulam-Vizianagaram-Vishakhapatnam area of Andhra, we face a problem while trying to study the range of movements of the *brāhmaṇas* from the 6th to the 10th century CE. It is not always possible to identify the residential village and the gifted village stated in the same charter. Almost all of the grants from the area, though mentioning the name of the residential villages/places, are silent about the name of the division within which it included. And in most cases, the location of the assigned village has been mentioned which helps in their partial identification. To explain the matter, a 7th century grant of Eastern Ganga Indravarman IV confirms the donation of land in the *Tungannā* village in the *Rūpyāvatī-viṣaya* (Hultzsch 1983). The information leads us to the easy conclusion that the village was located in the Tekkali area of Srikakulam district. But, the village from which the grantee hailed is mentioned simply as *Garakhonna*. In other words, the charter is refrained from referring to the name of the *viṣaya/rāstra* or suchlike within which the village *Garakhonna* was situated. A few plates mention the region of residential village. One such evidence comes from 7th century Srikakulam where the joint

donees named *Pillikaśarmā* and *Pillikasvāmini* are said to have been residing in *Kalīngapura* in the *Guṇḍra viṣaya*, though the latter can not be identified (Rajaguru 1968: 100-1). Still, there are some grants in which these place-names have been properly identified. And there are others in which the identification is based upon conjecture.

At least a few grants give us the impression that the donees did not desert their paternal dwellings at all. We can clarify the matter by showing a 7th century grant of the Eastern Ganga king Indravarman, which mentions two *brāhmaṇas* named *Skandaśarmā* and *Lalitaśarmā* who, being the dual residents of both *Avareṅga* and *Kalinganagara* (*Avareṅga Kalinganagarē ḍbhaya sthāna vāstavyatm*) accepted the donation of the village *Tālamūla* situated in the *Korosoṭaka Pañchālī* (Fleet 1984). What is the implication of introducing them as the residents of two places? Probably, they accepted the royal grant but abstained from dwelling in the donated village. It is a case of movement and not migration. They probably visited their donated village, but had their homes in *Avareṅga* and *Kalinganagara*. However, we can not conclude so easily from each and every plate. In 591 CE., another *brāhmaṇa* named *Dhruvaśarman*, who belonged to the community of *Kalinganagara* (*Kalinganagara sāmānya*), received the village *Kettaṭa* in *Dēvanna Pañchālī* (Fleet 1984). We can not determine if *Dhruvaśarman* permanently left *Kalinganagara* and settled in *Kettaṭa*. But some of the grants show that the donee gave away the received village to others. The 9th century Munjeru copper plate charter of Anantavarman records the grant of *Chirkudi-grāma* in the *Dāvada-viṣaya* to *Śri-Kaṇakhaṇḍi*, who was a resident of *Nagara* (Tripathy 2010: 862-3). He again gifted the same village to brahmin residents of *Deudī Munjeraka* and *Danti*. This evidence indicates that the donee *brāhmaṇa* had no connection with movements and migration.

Next question is how much distance the donee should cover to be stamped as an immigrant. Historians like R.N. Nandi considers the crossing of even two miles as the proof of migration. He has mentioned a grant where the original home of the donee was *Vijaya-Anirudhapuri* near Ten and the gift village was *Balisa* lying two miles west of Ten (Nandi 1986: 30). In other words, emphasis was always on the permanent change of residence and here the factor of distance was insignificant. In fact, migration can occur at variety of scales like intercontinental, intra-continental, interregional or intraregional. However, the epigraphs coming from the area under study reveal no special migration patterns. Probably, the cause of migration was not the same everywhere. There could have been rural to urban migration in search of opportunities, but at the same time, one could go from one village to another for specific reasons.

In the Srikakulam-Vizianagaram-Vishakhapatnam tract, *brāhmaṇas* moved both locally and regionally; even inter-regional movements are visible which were certainly the cases of migrations. In 580 CE., a *brāhmaṇa* resident of *Urāmalle* (Urlum in Srikakulam) was given land in *Hondevaka* in *Krōṣṭukavarttanī* which comprised the Narasannapeta taluka of

Srikakulam district ( Hultsch 1983). Therefore, the donee had to visit his land in *Hondevaka* even if he did not change his residence. In 649 CE., a *brāhmaṇa* named *Bhavadattaśarman* was gifted the division (*chheda*) of *Bhukkukura* in *Kūrakarāṣṭra* or *Bukkur* in Palakonda Taluka (Ramadas). He came from *Trilinga*, i.e., parts of Mahanadi valley and Vishakhapatnam district. Another charter of 633 CE. refers to various *brāhmaṇas* of various *gotras* (but all of *Bahvṛch charaṇa*), who were the residents of *Andōrakāgrahāra* (*Andhavaram* in the Srikakulam district) and were gifted the village named *Tōṭavāṭaka* in *Krōṣṭukavarttānī* (Subrahmanyam 1987 ). Now the distance between *Tōṭavāṭaka* and *Andhavaram* is said to have been 8 miles. We can not determine whether they left their earlier home and settled in *Tōṭavāṭaka*. It should be noted that the residence of the donee *brāhmaṇas* was already an *agrahāra*. If they at all hailed from their original places, there should have been some reasons behind it. It is probable that the *agrahāra* was gradually turning out to be unable to sustain the growing number of *brāhmaṇa* population; or some kind of opposition led them to seek fortune elsewhere. It is also possible that *brāhmaṇas* of this particular *charaṇa* offered some services to the king which led to their possession of tax-free *agrahāra*. As the *kuṭumbināḥ* of the village were instructed in the plate to give proper *bhāga* and *bhōga* to these *brāhmaṇas*, it was natural that the collection of the same brought the donees to *Tōṭavāṭaka*.

We can show instances which indicate that some of the *brāhmaṇas* came to the Srikakulam-Vizianagaram-Vishakhapatnam area from other parts of Andhra. In 695 CE., the *brāhmaṇa* named *Tampara-śarma-dīkṣita* was granted some land in the *Siddhārthaka* village in the *Varāhavarttānī viṣaya* in Srikakulam (Pantulu 1982). He was also granted a house-site (*niveśana*) in the Brahmacharin-quarter (*brahmachārīchchheda*) in *Siddhārthaka* which is very important information. *Tampara-śarma-dīkṣita*'s original habitat was *Ērāṇḍapali*, situated in the Godavari tract. Probably, he permanently left his native place and therefore, the king had to arrange a dwelling place for him. He was also gifted a water-course (*udakamārga*) which he enjoyed. For, the *kuṭumbinas* were instructed not to put obstacle in the way of his enjoyment of the water through the charter. Now, the village where *Tampara-śarma-dīkṣita* settled for the second time was famous for a *rājataṭāka* and several land-grants given by the Eastern Ganga kings. Interestingly, the officer (*adhikṛta*) who wrote the charter was *Madanāñikura Pallava* of the family of *Apūrvanāṭa* living in *Ērāṇḍapali*. We can not determine if the influence of this officer (native of *Ērāṇḍapali*) helped the donee to settle in *Siddhārthaka*. Again, the suffix *Pallava* to the name of the officer shows that his family came to *Ērāṇḍapali* from further south. As for *Siddhārthaka*, it was so familiar a name that in another grant of 9th century CE. (Mirashi 1987) a village to be granted was described as *Sidhathāsambandhini* or situated near *Sidhathā* or *Siddhārthaka*. In the 9th century Bangalore Copper Plate Charter of Devendravarman (Tripathy 2010: 628-9) a grant was made in the *Siddhatā* village for

worship of Parameśvara Paramabhattāraka and the recipient on behalf of the deity was *guru Vinūtaśāśī* who was the resident of *Śrīparvata* (Srisailam in Kurnool). So, he came from the southern part of Andhra and took the responsibility of temple in Srikakulam. Thus, we can see that *Sidhathā* drew *brāhmaṇas* from distant regions who came and settled here.

It is possible to show with a few evidences that *brāhmaṇas* from other parts of the India came to the Srikakulam region. In 716 CE., *brāhmaṇas* of different *gotras* from Ānandapura were granted village in the division named *Kalāmadambiśakuna* in the Varāhavarttanī viṣaya (Subrahmanyam 1987). We come to know from a 10th century grant that a village in the Ahmedabad district in Gujarat was assigned to a *brāhmaṇa* who hailed from Ānandapura (Nandi 1986: 37). Ānandapura has been identified with Vadner near Baroda. If the Eastern Ganga charter of 716 CE. refers to the same Ānandapura then we have to assume that they collectively emigrated from the place and moved towards the Orissa-Andhra border. In fact, from about the early years of the 7th century to the beginning of the 8th, *brāhmaṇas* are seen to have been emigrated from Ānandapura which has been attested by five Maitraka grants. According to Swati Datta, this could have been resulted from its being over-populated with *brāhmaṇas* of equal learning (Datta 1989: 110) . But why did they come to the Srikakulam region? In this context we can mention the remarks of Swati Datta who has pointed to the fact that from Orissa no migration is recorded though it attracted a large number of *brāhmaṇas*. In her opinion, the existence of ports in Orissa eliminated the need for emigrations from here (Datta 1989: 113-4). One may think that the Srikakulam region, which was under the rule of the Eastern Ganga dynasty of Orissa throughout the period under discussion, also should witness the same phenomenon. But, there is the evidence of migration from this region too. We get one inscription of last quarter of the 9th century CE. belonging to Mahabhavagupta I Janmejaya (the Somavamsi ruler of Kosala) which mentions about the grant of a village in *Oṅgataṭa* (on bank of Onga river, the tributary of Mahanadi) to some *brāhmaṇas* (Mitra Shastri 1995:172-6). One of them was *Koṇḍadeva* who emigrated from *Kaliṅga* (*Kaliṅgavinirgataḥ*) and later became a resident of *Pampāsarasi* (*Pampāsarasi-vāstavya*). *Brāhmaṇas* of Bengal came to the Eastern Ganga territory also. *Govindaśarman* of *Uttara-Rāḍha* came to the Eastern Ganga dominion in 808 CE. (Chhabra 1984) *Uttara-Rāḍha* comprised portions of Birbhum and Bardhaman districts of West Bengal (Majumdar 2005: 11-2). *Brāhmaṇas* from the Middle country continued to settle in this particular area of Bengal as known from the charter of the Varman dynasty. *Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva*, the minister of the Varman king Harivarman and a *brāhmaṇa* of *Rāḍha*, was proficient in *Brahmadvaita* system of philosophy and many other branches of knowledge (Majumdar 2005:308) Roughly this region of Bengal witnessed the coming and going of the *brāhmaṇas* in the early-medieval period.

The reference to a particular *gotra* to which the donee *brāhmaṇa* belonged can also supply valuable information regarding his original habitat if the name of this *gotra* is not

very common. The *gotra* continued with little modification to the present day and as an exogamous patrilineal group whose members trace their descent back to a common ancestor. To be more elaborate on the point, the lines of descent from the major sages were originally divided into *gaṇas* and each *gaṇa* was further divided into families. Subsequently, the term *gotra* was frequently applied to the *gaṇas* and to the families within the *gaṇas* interchangably. The Napitavata grant of Ganga Devendravarman in the 9th-10th century CE. (Gai 1987) refers to the two donee brothers who belonged to the *Kāmukāyani gotra*. Now, the *gotra* name *Kāmukāyana* is available in the epigraphs of Orissa. And the *brāhmaṇas* belonging to this *gotra* are now known to have settled in different parts of Orissa (Tripathy 1997 :28). So, it was possible that the donees did not come from any distant region.

The traces of movements of *brāhmaṇas* are visible, not always in respect of individual *brāhmaṇas*, but in the name of a particular *brāhmaṇa* community. The Vaidik brahmins are a sect of Telugu-speaking Smarts brahmins. They have the sub-divisions like Telga Nadu, Vengi Nadu, Kasal Nadu etc. (Hassan 1990: 124). At some remote period, *brāhmaṇas* migrated form South Kosala to Andhra and their descendants were known as Kosalanatis or people of *Kośalai nādu* (Singh Deo 1987: 60). Still we can not say the range of time during which the area witnessed this movement. Already we have noticed from Somavamsi inscription that migration took place from *Kalirīga* to *Kośala*. Can we assume that movements from south to north and north to south was a regular phenomenon? We can not determine if the coming and going was a slow process in a particular time or was a quicker development in a given period. Only we can conclude that the Srikakulam region saw the settlements of *brāhmaṇas* coming from different parts of Andhra and also from different parts of India from the 6th to the 10th century CE.

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# **Religious Patronage and Political Power: The Ambivalent Character of Royal Donations in Sanskrit Epigraphy<sup>1</sup>**

**ANNETTE SCHMIEDCHEN**

Because of the mutually inextricable connections between politics and religion in pre-modern India, royal donations in support of religious institutions always constituted an important instrument of power. There is almost no early medieval dynasty that did not issue any copper-plate charters, the classical Indian medium for the recording of royal or official endowments in favour of religious donees since the 4th century A.D. These Sanskrit records, which regularly comprise three parts—1st the account of the dynastic genealogy in prose or in verses, 2nd the description of the land grant [mostly] in prose, and 3rd stanzas for protecting the donation from confiscation—contain plenty of information about the political ideology and the religious ideas fostered by Indian rulers and royal dynasties. Thus, many kings not only had their official land grants registered in these title deeds, but also revealed their personal religious affiliations. References to religious ideas and religious leanings occur in various contexts in these copper-plate charters and, therefore, have to be weighted differently, too. The evidence seems to have been determined by universally applicable concepts of political power and religious legitimization, by dynastic traditions, by the character of the particular grantees, and, finally, by the personality of the individual kings.

Ideally, the authenticity of a royal copper-plate charter is attested by a seal showing not only a legend, but also depicting some regal and/or religious symbols. The records proper frequently open with invocation formulae and stanzas for one or several deities or for a religious teacher. The epigraphs contain descriptions of the dynastic genealogy, where the individual kings and their queens are compared with gods and goddesses, epic heroes and heroines. In the genealogical passages, the religious patronage and the charity activities of the rulers are also often referred to in a general manner. Sometimes this unspecific evidence is corroborated or even specified by other types of inscriptions (*prāśastis* and votive inscriptions) and non-epigraphic sources. The grant portions of the copper-plate charters are usually introduced with an enumeration of titles for the current ruler-cum-donor. Many kings gave information about their personal (and their predecessors') religious leanings through the use of particular epithets. For some dynasties, a family deity is mentioned. The epigraphs also frequently record that villages and land were donated for acquiring religious merit after having taken a ritual bath and having worshipped a certain god or goddess. And, as already mentioned, the recipients of the grants documented on copper plates were almost exclusively religious ones.

The strongest indication for the individual religious affiliations of kings is given by the religious epithets among their royal titles. Not in all copper-plate charters issued from the

4th century onwards, appellations referring to the religious leanings of their royal donors have been employed. But there is at least sporadic evidence for their use in the epigraphs of most dynasties, and very often such religious titles were constantly applied.<sup>1</sup> The personal religious confession of a ruler to be a Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist, etc. often contrasted remarkably with the patronage patterns followed by him in his official epigraphs. It is a striking feature of the data that almost all Indian dynasties that ever issued copper plates between the 4th and the 10th centuries endowed first and foremost Brahmins and only secondarily other potential donees, whether Buddhist and Jain monasteries or Hindu temples. Even those kings who considered themselves to be Buddhist lay followers rather bestowed villages and land predominantly on individual Brahmins or large Brahmanical groups. While this ambivalent relationship between the personal beliefs of the kings and their donative practice has been repeatedly described as an expression of Indian religious ‘tolerance’ or of the specific character of Indian religious tradition, this paper emphasizes that there were several reasons for this dichotomy.

Among the religious epithets of the royal patrons, one frequently comes across such terms as *paramabrahmanyā*, *paramadaivata*, *paramamāheśvara*, *paramabhāgavata*, *paramavaiṣṇava*, *paramasaugata*, etc., that is, compounds composed of *parama*<sup>o</sup> and a *vriddhi* (or other) derivation from the deity or religious teacher this person felt attached to. Sometimes *parama*<sup>o</sup> was added to a compound consisting of the name of the god or goddess and the final element <sup>o</sup>*bhakta* (e.g., *paramādityabhakta*, *paramabhagavatībhakta*). In a few cases *parama*<sup>o</sup> was substituted by an equivalent, as for instance *atyanta*<sup>o</sup> (e.g., *atyantamāheśvara*, *atyantabhadragavadvadhbakta*). Occasionally appellations were formed with <sup>o</sup>*pādānudhyāta* (e.g., *bhagavatpādānudhyāta*), which in inscriptions cannot only denote religious affiliation, but also the subordination under a supreme ruler and the relationship to one’s father or predecessor.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 4th century, some kings and princes mainly in South India (Karnataka: Kadambas [Gai 1996: nos. 5, 37-38]; Andhra Pradesh: Viṣṇukūndins [Sankaranarayanan 1977], Eastern Cālukyas; Tamilnadu: Pallavas [Mahalingam 1988: no. 247] and East India (Orissa: Pāñduvaūśins [Shastri 1995: 74ff., 81ff.], Śailodbhavas [Tripathy 1997: 210], Eastern Gaṅgas) used the title *paramabrahmanyā*, ‘highly devoted to the Brahmins’ (Sircar 1965: 347; Sircar 1966: 236), which—given the extreme density of grants favouring individual Brahmins and Brahmanical groups—one would have expected to be spread all over India. Moreover, it is notable that this epithet was often combined with at least one further religious appellation. Some of the Viṣṇukūndin, Pallava, Pāñduvaūśin, and Sendraka kings in the 6th/7th centuries (e.g., Khare 1949/50: 201, 204) and some Eastern Cālukyas (e.g., Kielhorn 1896/97: 307) called themselves *paramamāheśvara paramabrahmanyā*; and some Eastern Gaṅga rulers (e.g., Sircar 1983: 173) were styled *paramabrahmanyā paramavaiṣṇava* in the 12th century.

The rather unspecific appellation *paramudaiyvata*, ‘highly devoted to the gods’,<sup>3</sup> and its derivations, however, seem to have been limited to the Gupta period. It was used by the local authorities of Bengal to characterize the Gupta kings (Bhandarkar 1981: 285, 289, 336, 343). In the 5th/6th centuries, local chiefs in Eastern India (Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh) also bore this title—sometimes together with other religious epithets (e.g., Bhattacharji 1947/48: 23, Tripathy 1997: 98, 108, 116, 124, 180).

It is well known that the Guptas gave a substantial impetus to the self-representation of contemporary as well as successor dynasties, which is particularly obvious in the development of titles. It was them who finally introduced epithets denoting imperial status or claims as *mahārājādhīrāja*, *parumabhuṭṭāraka*, [*purameśvara*,] etc., and since Gupta times, religious appellations completed the title lists in the charters of monarchs as well as of their vassals.<sup>4</sup>

Candragupta II was the first Gupta king who was called *parumabhāgavata*, ‘highly devoted to the Bhagavat (=Viṣṇu)’ in epigraphic as well as numismatic sources (Bhandarkar 1981: 253f., fn. 3, Sircar [1942]: 282, Sircar 1965: 346f., Sircar 1966: 235, Virkus 2004: 147).<sup>5</sup> The use of this epithet spread among several kings and local princely houses within the sphere of influence of Gupta culture from Gujarat (Maitrakas)<sup>6</sup> to Orissa (Pitrabhaktas [Tripathy 1997: 114, 122] and Śarabhapuriyas [Shastri 1995: 8, 12, 14, 17, 20, 24, 28, 32, 35, 39, 43, 46, 53, 53, 56]) in the 5th/6th centuries. Most likely, some 5th-century Śālānikāyana rulers of South-East India borrowed the appellation *parumabhāgavata* from the Guptas as well (Sankaranarayanan 1977/78: 94). Prabhāvatīgupta, the famous Vākāṭaka queen of Gupta origin, was called *uttyantabhagavatpūdabhaktī*, ‘devout female worshipper of the Bhagavat’, or *bhagavatpādānudhāytā*, ‘favoured by the feet of the Bhagavat’ (Mirashi 1963: 7 and 36, Sircar 1965: 348). The 5th/6th-century West-Indian Traikūṭakas styled themselves *bhagavatpādakarmukara*, ‘servants of the feet of the Bhagavat’, in their epigraphs (Mirashi 1955: 24, 27).<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the religious epithet *parumabhāgavata*, there are epigraphic attestations for some other Vaiṣṇava titles. It cannot always be decided whether different terms denoted different traditions within Vaiṣṇavism. But the Traikūṭaka kings labelled *bhagavatpādakarmukara* in their inscriptions are called *paramavaiṣṇava* in their coins (Mirashi 1955: XLIIIf.). *Paramavaiṣṇava* (Sircar 1966: 237) was the religious epithet used for several rulers in North India (9th/10th-century Gurjara-Pratihāras [e.g., Fleet 1886: 140f.]) and East India (Orissa: 8th-century Pāñduvarṣins [Shastri 1995: 103, 108], 10th-century Bhañjas [Tripathy 1974: 53], 12th-century Eastern Gangas [Sircar 1983: 173]; Bengal: 12th-century Varmanas and Senas [Majumdar 1929: 20]). For a Bhaumakara queen from 9th-century Orissa (Tripathy 1999: 156, 163, 169) and for an Eastern Gaṅga queen (Bhattacharyya 1935/36: 80), the female equivalent *paramavaiṣṇavī* was used. The Sēna king Lakṣmaṇasena not only called himself *paramavaiṣṇava*, but also *paramanārasiṁha*, ‘highly devoted to the Narasiṁha

[*avatāra* of Viṣṇu]’ (Majumdar 1929: 95, 111). The 5th-century Māثارas of Orissa employed expressions like *bhagavatsvāminārāyaṇapādānudhyāta* and *nārāyaṇa-svāminaḥ pādabhakta* (Tripathy 1997: 92, 95).

However, the epithet *paramamāheśvara*, ‘highly devoted to Maheśvara (=Śiva)’ (Sircar 1966: 236), is the geographically and chronologically widest spread and most used religious title in royal inscriptions. It was an appellation of several members of various dynasties in Orissa, of a number of kings belonging to the Śālāṅkāyanas, Vākāṭakas (*atyantamāheśvara*), Kadambas, Viṣṇukuṇḍins, Pallavas, Maitrakas, Kāṭaccuris, Gurjaras, Sendrakas, and Cālukyas of Lāṭa, of Harṣa of Kanauj and the Gurjara-Pratihāra ruler Vatsarāja as well as of the Gāhaḍavāla, Sena, Bhañja, and Candella kings and some members of the Late Western as well as of the Eastern Cālukyas. Two Bhaumakara queens also regarded themselves as *paramamāheśvarī* (Tripathy 1999: 175, 180, 187, 193, 199, 205). Besides *paramamāheśvara*, there are other Śaiva epithets attested as, for instance, the term *atyanta-svāmimahābhairavabhakta* used for the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena I (Mirashi 1963: 12, 18, 23, 30).<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the evidence for Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava titles, some epithets referring to an affiliation towards the sun god can be found in copper-plate charters dating from the 6th to the 12th/13th centuries. The 6th-century Maitraka Dharapāṭṭa, who probably never ruled, was called *paramādityabhakta* in the epigraphs of his grandson Dharasena II (e.g., Hultzsch 1911/12). Harṣa of Kanauj recorded in his three known copper-plate grants<sup>9</sup> that his great-grandfather, his grandfather, and his father, who had probably also lived in the 6th century A.D., had been ‘devout worshippers of the sun god’ (*paramādityabhakta*). Two 9th/10th-century Gurjara-Pratihāra rulers, Rāmabhadra and Vināyakapāla, were endowed with the appellation *paramādityabhakta* as well (Fleet 1886: 140f.), and the 13th-century Sena king Viśvarūpasena was also highly devoted to the sun god, but he called himself *paramasaura*, not *paramādityabhakta* (e.g., Majumdar 1929: 145).<sup>10</sup>

Besides the Brahmanical or Hindu epithets mentioned, there are, of course, also epigraphic references to Buddhist titles for kings. In a 6th-century Maitraka charter from Gujarat, the royal patron Guhasena is described as *paramopāsaka*, ‘excellent [Buddhist] lay follower’ (Bühler 1876: 207, Sircar 1966: 237), as is one female member (*paramopāsikā*) of this line, Duddā who had donated a large monastic complex (e.g., Bühler 1875: 105). The expressions *paramopāsaka/paramopāsikā* differ from other religious epithets beginning with *parama*<sup>o</sup> regarding their composition (no *vrddhi* derivation from a deity or religious teacher) as well as their attestations, which are not, more or less, confined to the royalty, but can be found for followers of the Buddha from all layers of society in Buddhist inscriptions and literature.

The more common epigraphic appellation for Buddhist rulers, however, was *paramasau-*  
*gata*, ‘highly devoted to the Sugata (=Buddha)’ (Sircar 1966: 237), which was used for

Vikramendravarman I, a 6th-century Viṣṇukuṇḍin king in Andhra Pradesh (Sankaranarayanan 1977), and also by Harṣa of Kanauj to describe his elder brother Rājyavardhana II (Agrawal 2003: 220ff., Bühler 1892: 72, Bühler 1896/97: 208, Goyal 2005: 136ff.). The epithets *paramopāsaka*, *paramasaugata*, and *paramatathāgata* occur under the early Bhaumakaras of 8th-century Orissa, too (Tripathy 1999: 110, 120f., 125, 131). And the Bengal kings of the Pāla and Candra dynasties also called themselves *paramasaugata* (e.g., Majumdar 1929: 5, 12, Sircar 1951/52: 7, 11).<sup>11</sup>

The use of these religious titles differed remarkably from one dynasty to another. In some cases, a particular appellation was part of the dynastic tradition and thus also of the established stock of epithets—like those titles which were to represent political claims. But in many other royal lines, the religious appellations frequently changed from one king to another (Sircar 1965: 348f.). These differences suggest that the use of a particular epithet was caused by individual preferences. A few rulers even seem to have changed their religious affiliation during their reign;<sup>12</sup> others used Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava titles side by side.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, there are some examples where certain kings were posthumously described by their successors not in the same way as they had regarded themselves during their lifetimes.

The epigraphic material of the Maitraka dynasty, which ruled in Gujarat from the 6th to the 8th centuries, is particularly dense: More than 100 copper-plate charters issued by 16 different rulers in favour of various religious recipients are known. According to their own testimony, most of the Maitraka kings were adherents of Siva (*paramamāheśvara*), and only some of the early members of this royal line deviated from this general scheme. Unlike the mainstream, Dhruvasena I was described as ‘highly devoted to the Bhagavat’ (*paramabhāgavata*) in his more than 20 inscriptions (and in the epigraphs of his immediate successors), Dharapatiṭṭa was, as already mentioned, labelled ‘devout worshipper of the sun’ (*paramādityabhakta*) in the charters of his grandson, and Guhasena was referred to as ‘excellent [Buddhist] lay follower’ (*paramopāsaka*). This epithet was used in one of Guhasena’s three records, all of them being Buddhist. Initially he had himself called *paramamāheśvara*. However, in his latest known charter, he (or his clerks) shifted to the title *paramopāsaka*. But all his successors described him (as well as themselves) as adherent[s] of Śiva, and since the beginning of the 7th century, only those early kings were mentioned in the genealogies of the later ones, who had regarded themselves as *paramamāheśvara*. This attempt to homogenize the religious tradition can perhaps be explained as part of the endeavour to create a consistent dynastic history. Nevertheless, there is no congruity between the established religious affiliation of the Maitrakas and their official patronage patterns. Approximately three quarters of their charters record land grants in favour of individual Brahmins or Brahmanical groups without any association with a temple, and one quarter registers the bestowal of villages on Buddhist monasteries. Despite their Śaiva leanings, there are only five pieces of evidence available so far for donations by Maitraka

kings in favour of Hindu temples—one for Mahādeva (=Śiva) (Bühler 1880), two for the sun god (Banerji 1931/32, Parikh et al 1988/89), and two for female goddesses (Jackson 1898).

In contrast to the well-attested Maitraka grants, there are merely three known copperplate charters that belong to the royal family of their famous quasi-contemporary Harṣa of Kanauj (Agrawal 2003, Bühler 1892, Bühler 1896/97, Goyal 2005). All of them were issued by Harṣa himself. As their Maitraka counterparts, these records contain no metrical genealogy, but a prose description of the sequence of rulers with integrated title list. Naravardhana, the first king mentioned, has not been endowed with any religious epithet. His immediate successors, Rājyavardhana I, Ādityavardhana, and Prabhākaravardhana, were called *para-mādityabhakta*. While Harṣa's elder brother Rājyavardhana II was described as *paramasau-gata* and even compared with the Buddha (*sugata iva*) regarding his benevolent activity, Harṣa himself was styled *paramamāheśvara* and compared to Śiva (*maheśvara iva*). The authenticity of one of the grants (Agrawal 2003: 220ff., Goyal 2005: 136ff.) is attested by a seal depicting the Śaiva symbol of a bull and repeating the enumeration of the rulers and their appellations.<sup>14</sup> All the three title deeds, however, record donations of villages in favour of one or two Brahmins each without any obvious affiliation towards a Śaiva institution.<sup>15</sup> In this context, it is also worth mentioning that the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who met Harṣa during his travels through Northern India in the early 7th century, described this ruler of Kanauj as a patron and follower of Buddhism (Watters 1904: 341ff.).

The few 9th/10th-century copper-plate charters issued by the Gurjara-Pratihāra rulers, which were found scattered over a vast territory that reaches from Gujarat to Bihar (Puri 1957: 220ff.), resemble Harṣa's records in so far as they also contain a prose genealogy with integrated title list and a seal repeating the names and epithets of the rulers. The genealogical portion reveals that three of the kings were endowed with the religious appellation *paramabhadragatībhakta*, 'devout worshipper of the Bhagavatī (=Lakṣmī or Durgā/Pārvatī)' (Ngabhaṭa, Bhoja I, Mahendrapāla), two with *paramavaiṣṇava* (Devaśakti, Bhoja II), two with *paramādityabhakta* (Rāmabhadra, Vināyaka) and one with the epithet *paramamāheśvara* (Vatsarjadeva). The beneficiaries of the five known Gurjara-Pratihāra grants were Ṛg-, Yajur-, Sāma- and Atharvavedins (e.g., Fleet 1886: 140f.), but no Hindu shrines, although several temples are referred to in a number of stone inscriptions from the Gurjara-Pratihāra period. There have been found even a few attestations for donations meant to support temples in Gujarat from the Gurjara-Pratihāra period. The relevant copper-plate charters, however, were not issued by the imperial rulers themselves, but by their feudatories, who only mentioned the imperial titles of their overlords, not their religious epithets (Kielhorn 1907/08: 4ff.).

A gradual shift in the patronage pattern from the overall dominance of grants in favour of Brahmins with no connection to any temple towards an increase of bestowals on Hindu

temples and Brahmins attached to them can be detected in East-Indian epigraphs. In the nine known copper-plate charters of the 8th-century Pāṇḍuvamśin dynasty of Kośala, the rulers called themselves either *purumavaiṣṇava* or *parumumāheśvuru*. Their individual religious affiliation was reflected in the design of their seals and, at least partly, in their patronage pattern, too. The *purumavaiṣṇava* Tivaradeva had a Garuḍa seal fixed to his title deeds, and a grant of his son records a donation in favour of a *bhāgavata* Brahmin (Shastri 1995: 117). During the reign of the *parumumāheśvuru* Śivagupta, a seal with a bull was in use, and apart from Brahmins, Śiva temples were endowed with land as well (e.g., Shastri 1995: 129).

Still three quarters of the twenty copper-plate charters issued by the 8th/9th-century kings and queens of the Bhaumakara dynasty of Orissa record endowments on Brahmins—sometimes on large groups of them. But the beneficiaries of the remaining title deeds were Śiva temples and Buddhist monasteries. Although all the early Bhaumakara kings regarded themselves as Buddhists, the endeavour for some variety in the epithets can be traced in their epigraphs. Different epithets were used for different rulers: *parumopāsaku*, *paramasuugata*, and *parumututhāgata*. Śivākara III was even called *sugatāśraya*, ‘one who has taken refuge with the Sugata’ (Tripathy 1999: 121). Despite their Buddhist affiliation, not all the early Bhaumakara rulers were characterised as founders of monasteries. Śubhākara I is said to have made *vṛṇāśrama* his *svadharma* (Tripathy 1999: 110). But in the 9th century, the religious leanings of the Bhaumakaras seem to have finally changed. The later kings, starting with Śubhākara V, were denoted as *parumumāheśvuru* (e.g., Tripathy 1999: 137, 142, 149, 224) and the queens called themselves *parumumāheśvarī* (e.g., Tripathy 1999: 175, 180, 187, 193, 199, 205, 219) with the exception of queen Tribhuvanamahādevī, a *purumavaiṣṇavī* (e.g., Tripathy 1999: 156, 163, 169). This change in the epithets, however, did not coincide with any shift in the patronage pattern of the dynasty.

The Buddhist Pāla kings, who reigned in Bihar and Bengal from the 8th to the 12th centuries, called themselves *paramasuugata*. Grants of villages and land in favour of individual Brahmins are recorded by 65 per cent of their twenty-two known copper-plate charters, with a tendency of concentration towards the later period of Pāla rule. Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were bestowed, conspicuously frequently at somebody’s instigation, in the remaining title deeds. It was mostly members of their own family and of other dynasties as well as royal dignitaries who founded Buddhist and Hindu institutions and prevailed upon the Pāla kings to support them. Usually a Buddhist seal depicting the *dharmacakra* flanked by two deer was attached to the charters;<sup>16</sup> and the epigraphs very often open with a Buddhist stanza. Since the 10th century, the predominantly Brahmanical donations were explicitly made ‘in the name of the lord Buddha’ (*bhugvuntum buddhabhūttārakum uddisya*) (e.g., Sircar 1951/52: 8, 12).<sup>17</sup> But despite a certain Buddhist influence on the design of the Pāla epigraphs, one comes across the usual comparisons with Purāṇic

gods and epic heroes for several Pāla kings in the genealogical portions, well-known from the inscriptions of non-Buddhist rulers.

In the 12th/13th century, the Pālas were succeeded by the Sena dynasty, who left some ten copper-plate charters. As the late Pāla kings, the Senas seem to have issued grants exclusively in favour of individual Brahmins. In contrast to the Pālas, however, the Senas were no Buddhists. Vijayasena and Ballālasena, who called themselves *purumumāheśvara*, opened their copper-plate charters with an invocation formula and an invocation stanza to praise Śiva, and Vijayasena dedicated his Brahmanical donation to Maheśvara (*bhagavantam muheśvarum uddiṣ्यa*) (Majumdar 1929: 63, lines 41f.). Lakṣmaṇasena regarded himself as *paramavaiṣṇava* and *paramanārasiṁha*, respectively, opened his records with an invocation formula for Nārāyaṇa, and made his grants in the name of Nārāyaṇa (*bhagavantum śrīmunnārāyaṇum uddiṣ्यa*) (Majumdar 1929: 87, lines 43f.; 96, line 45). But his epigraphs also contain an invocation stanza for Śiva (Majumdar 1929: 85). Viśvarūpasena bore the title *purumasaura* (e.g., Majumdar 1929: 145). From Lakṣmaṇasena, he apparently borrowed the invocation formula to Nārāyaṇa, which was followed by an invocation stanza for the sun god in his charters. A seal depicting the ten-armed Sadāśiva and described as *sudūśivamudrā* in some of the records (Majumdar 1929: 132 and 137, line 50) was attached to all the known Sena title deeds. In the Govindapur copper-plate charter of *paramavaiṣṇava* Lakṣmaṇasena, his father Ballālasena, who was a *purumumāheśvara*, is probably by mistake also called *paramavaiṣṇava* (Majumdar 1929: 95).

### **Summary**

The epigraphic records of many early medieval rulers begin with verses praising Śiva and Viṣṇu and compare the deeds of these kings with the activities of Hindu gods and goddesses. Although most of the royal patrons called themselves ‘devout worshippers’ of either Śiva and Viṣṇu, the total number of grants for the upkeep of Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava temples is rather small compared to those in favour of Brahmins. This ambivalent relationship between the personal beliefs of the kings and their donative practices seems to be strongly connected with the general objectives of the imperial patronage policy and with the specific character of the Brahmanical donees. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the formula used to describe the religious merit (*pūrya*) acquired by royal grants was, despite minor modifications, a pan-religious one in the great majority of official charters, regardless who the donees were. Mostly, the endowments were made ‘for the increase of the religious merit (and fame)’ of the donor and his parents in a general way. Only in a few cases, a special ‘sectarian’ influence can be traced: Some Buddhist kings included ‘all beings’ into the *pūrya* formula, but again irrespectively of the affiliation of the recipient of the grant.<sup>18</sup>

Until the 10th century—and in some regions even longer (Gāhaḍavālas, Pālas, Senas)—most Indian rulers, although they often tended to balance their patronage somehow, seem

to have clearly preferred Brahmanical recipients in their land-grant policy—for the greater mobility of Brahmins compared to religious institutions, for their evidently higher adaptability to the rural environment of the objects granted to them and for several other reasons. Since the middle of the 10th century, however, the number of copper-plate grants in favour of temples and Brahmins attached to them increased dramatically, as can be seen in the epigraphic corpora of many dynasties.<sup>19</sup> The way for these developments had been largely paved by local and regional elites who had founded and supported Hindu temples much earlier than the imperial rulers. Their activities are mainly recorded on stone, and not on copper-plates.

## APPENDIX: Religious Epithets of Some Dynasties

### 1. Maitrakas

mostly *paramamāheśvara*; three exceptions:

Dhruvasena I	= <i>paramabhāgavata</i>
Dharapāṭṭa	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>
Guhasenā	= <i>paramopāsaka</i>

### 2. Puṣyabhūtis

Naravardhana	= no epithet
Rājyavardhana I	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>
Ādityavardhana	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>
Prabhākaravardhana	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>
Rājyavardhana II	= <i>paramasaugata</i>
Harṣa	= <i>paramamāheśvara</i>

### 3. Gurjara-Pratihāras

Devaśakti	= <i>paramavaiṣṇava</i>
Vatsarāja	= <i>paramamāheśvara</i>
Nāgabhaṭa	= <i>paramabhagavatībhakta</i>
Rāmabhadra	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>
Bhoja I	= <i>paramabhagavatībhakta</i>
Mahendrapāla	= <i>paramabhagavatībhakta</i>
Bhoja II	= <i>paramavaiṣṇava</i>
Vināyakapāla	= <i>paramādityabhakta</i>

### 4. Bhaumakaras

*paramopāsaka, paramatathāgata, paramasaugata, sugatāśraya*

*parumamāheśvuru, parumumāheśvarī, parumavaiṣṇuvī*

### 5. Pālas

*parumasuagata* = dedication: *bhugavantum buddhabhūṭṭārukum uddiṣya*

### 6. Senas

Vijayasena, Ballālasena	= <i>purumamāheśvara</i> dedication: <i>bhugavantum māheśvarum uddiṣya</i>
Lakṣmaṇasena	= <i>purumavaiṣṇava/purumānārasinīha</i> dedication: <i>bhugavantum śrīmānārātyuṇam uddiṣya</i>
Viśvarūpasena	= <i>purumusaura</i>

### Notes

- 1 This is an extended version of a paper read at the 13th World Sanskrit Conference held in Edinburgh in 2006.
- 2 For the proper translation of the expression *pādnudhyāta*, see Ferrier/Törzsök 2008.
- 3 But see Sircar (1966: 236): ‘highly devoted to the god (i.e. Viṣṇu)’. See also Sircar 1965: 347f.
- 4 The fact that subordinate rulers also bore religious epithets beginning with *parama*°, although they did not use imperial titles as *parameśvara* and *paramabhaṭṭāraka* and were thus not described as ‘supreme lord’ or ‘supreme sovereign’, but merely as *mahāsāmanta* or *mahārāja*, corroborates the translation of these designations with ‘highly devoted to ...’ instead of ‘supreme devotee of ...’.
- 5 Prabhāvatīguptā, the daughter of Candragupta II and queen of the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II, also referred to her father as *paramabhaṭṭāgavata*; see Mirashi 1963: 7, line 6; 36, line 6.
- 6 Dhruvasena I was the only Maitraka king being labelled *paramabhaṭṭāgavata*; see, for instance, Konow 1911/12: 107, line 12.
- 7 For another, but apparently wrong interpretation of the term *bhagavatpādakarmakara* in the Traikūṭaka inscriptions (as ‘epithet of a temple official’), see Sircar 1966: 48.
- 8 The title *paramapāśupatācārya*, which occurs in a 13th-century inscription from Gujarat (Hultzsch 1882: 242, line 8), does not belong to this class of epithets as it denotes an ‘excellent teacher of the Pāśupatas’, and is thus a denomination like *paramabrahmaṇa*.
- 9 For the Madhuban charter, see Bühlner 1892; for the Banskhera charter, see Bühlner 1896/97; and for the Kuruksetra-Varanasi charter, see Agrawal 2003 and Goyal 2005.
- 10 For the ‘phantom’ king Keśavasena (this name being a misreading of ‘Viśvarūpasena’), see Sircar 1974: 211ff. I owe this information to Ryosuke Furui (Tokyo).
- 11 In the metrical genealogy of some of the inscriptions of the Buddhist King Śrīcandra, his grandfather Suvarṇacandra is labelled as *bauddha*; see, for instance, Majumdar 1929: 4, line 6.
- 12 The 10th/11th-century ruler Raṇabhañja I of Kiñjalimandala was first called *paramavaiṣṇava*, and later *paramamāheśvara*; see Subramonia Iyer 1977/78: 66f. For an example of a shift into the opposite direction under the Eastern Gaṅgas, see Sircar 1965: 347.

- 13 For instance, king Vaidyadeva of Kāmarūpa, who ruled in 12th century Assam, bore the religious epithets *paramamāheśvara* and *paramavaiṣṇava* at the same time; see Venis 1894: 353, line 47.
- 14 The [copper] seal of the Madhuban charter is not forthcoming, and the seal of the Banskhera charter is extremely blurred. For the Nalanda clay seal of Harṣa, which also contains the bull device and his genealogy, see Thaplyal 1985: 186.
- 15 The name of only one Brahmanical donee shows a Śaiva affiliation, i.e. that of the Rgvedin Śivadevasvāmin; see Bühler 1892: 73, line 14.
- 16 The term *dharmaśakramudrā* is used in inscriptions of the Candra dynasty for the seal attached to them; see, for instance, Majumdar 1929: 1 and 5, line 31. The Varmanas, who were Vaiṣṇavas, used a seal that was called *viṣṇucakramudrā* in at least one of their charters; see Majumdar 1929: 14 and 21, line 48.
- 17 The 10th-century Candra king Śrīcandra, a *paramasaugata*, also made his Brahmanical grants ‘in the name of the lord Buddhabhṛttāraka’ (*bhagavantam buddhabhṛttārakam uddiṣya*). In the 11th-century, however, the late Candra kings, despite being called *paramasaugata* and unlike their Pāla contemporaries, dedicated their Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva endowments to Vāsudeva-bhṛttāraka and Śivabhaṭṭāraka, respectively, and thus ‘repudiated the Buddhist faith of their predecessors’ (Sircar 1971: 253).
- 18 For instance, the Buddhist Bhaumakara king Śubhākaradeva made his grant of two villages in favour of some two hundred Brahmins ‘for the increase of the religious merit of his parents, of himself, and of all beings’ (*mātāpitror ātmānah sarvasatvānāñ ca ... puṇyābhivṛddhiye*); see Tripathy 1999: 111, line 9.
- 19 After the 10th century, another type of religious epithet became rather common, i.e. a compound composed of the name of a god or goddess and *labdhavaraprasāda* (‘having obtained the favour of a boon from ...’), which Sanderson (2007: 289, fn. 185) has denoted as ‘common epigraphical formula in which the king is described as having obtained his sovereignty as the boon of this or that goddess’. These epithets, however, apparently had a slightly different character, as there seems to be a much stronger element of legitimization of power through the connection with a particular deity than in the earlier terms.

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## Some interesting Terracotta Plaques from Thailand and Burma— Collection of the Indian Museum, Kolkata

ANASUYA DAS

It is a well known fact that cultural interaction between India and the countries of South-East Asia, particularly Thailand (ancient Siam) and Myanmar (ancient Burma), started at a very early date of the Common Era and it was Buddhism that could claim to be the most important factor in this milieu.

Several books and articles have been written and published with regard to the history of this cultural interaction the types of influences and so on. But all these are mainly based on the larger arts like sculptures in stone or bronze and archaeological monuments. Some works on such plaques have been done by scholars in recent times (Chirapravati, 1997; Guy, 2002; Skilling, 2008; Ghosh, 2011). In this article, it has been intended to present few Buddhist terracotta plaques, which, though of very smaller sizes, are not less important for the study of iconography as well as art forms.

Of these, the plaque which I would like to mention first, shows a meditating Buddha (pl.-1) in the centre, seated on a lotus placed on a high pedestal. He is flanked by two Bodhisattvas both seated on separate lotus pedestals. Below them are two devotees seated on similar lotuses which are connected with two miniature *stupas* by lotus stalks. Found from Hmawzaim Myanmar (Acc. No. 10327) the plaque is in the shape of a medallion pointed at the top. It appears that the figures were stamped on the wet clay base and then baked.

A peculiar iconographic feature is to be seen on two terracotta plaques from the same site. The first (Acc. No. 10322/A 11129) shows a Buddha figure seated on the pod of a double-petalled lotus. Draped in a *sanghati*, with both the shoulders covered, he displays the *vyākhyāna mudrā* (pl.-2). The foreparts of two elephants are shown on either side of the lotus pedestal carrying by their trunks two miniature *stupas* placed on lotuses. Two *sārdulas* (tigers) are shown seated on their haunches on the back of two other elephants. The shape of the plaque is similar to the above specimen with identical impression of stamping. The other plaque (Acc. 10323/A 11142), though it displays the same iconographic features (i.e. Buddha in *vyākhyāna mudrā* elephants bearing *stupa* and *gajaśārdula* motifs) shows the stamping so hard that the edge of the plaque took the shape of a raised border (pl.-3).

The stamp impression causing the raised border appears on another, somewhat oval shaped plaque (Acc. No. 10328/A 11145) from the same site. It is (pl.-4) stamped with Buddhist figures in two tiers, the upper tier showing the Buddha, seated in preaching attitude with two standing bodhisattvas on his two sides.

We have another preaching Buddha seated on a double petalled lotus inside an oval

plaque (Acc. No. 10324/A 11133) with pointed top, also from the above mentioned site. Here, the Buddha figure, however is impressed in bold relief. A three line inscription (undecipherable) appears below the lotus pedestal (pl.-5).

Another plaque (Acc. No. 10317/A), now on display in the Minor Arts Gallery of the Museum, exhibits the preaching Buddha (defaced) as seated in *bhadrāsana* with legs rested on a smaller lotus. The three line inscription is engraved on either side of this smaller lotus pedestal. The *sikhara*-type superstructure above the arch and miniature *stūpas* appear on the surface.

The life scenes of the Buddha are found on a peculiar shaped plaque (Acc. No. 10316/A 11149). The plaque, though pointed at the top, is not in the shape of the other plaques. It is like a niche within which the figures are stamped. The central figure of the Buddha is seated in the earth-touching attitude under an arch capped by a *sikhara* motif. His birth and other life stories cover the surface on three sides. The three line inscription is below the seat (pl.-6).

The three line inscription (illegible) on the lowest bottom of the oval-shaped with pointed top plaque has also been found from the site of Yangon, Myanmar (Acc. No. 3 Rn. A 11134) which shows the Buddha in *bhumiśparṣa mudrā* under a trefoil arch surmounted by a temple-*sikhara* motif. The rest of the surface is covered with miniature *stūpa* motifs and branches of peepal tree (pl.-7).

From the site of Tagoung in the same country more plaques of this type have been found. One of these (acc. No. Tg. 3/A 11131) shows in a depressed surface the Buddha in preaching attitude seated under an arch surmounted (most probably) by a *sikhara* motif (upper part of the plaque being broken). The plaque also bears the usual three line undecipherable inscription, the *peepal* leaves along with some miniature *stūpas*.

More or less similar types of plaques have been found from different sites of Thailand, one of these (Acc. No. 83.11/A 15097) shows, in a sunken panel, the Buddha seated in *bhadrāsana* (lower part of the feet missing), displaying the *dharmačakra mudrā*. The arch is capped by what appears to be a temple *sikhara* (upper portion broken). Traces of *stūpas* and peepal leaves appear on the surface. The back portion is somewhat rounded.

The oval plaque (Acc. No. 8612/A 15098) from Khaokhrom cave in the Jairja district of Thailand shows a preaching Buddha attended by eight bodhisattvas seated on lotuses. The theme is identifiable with the *ashtabodhisattva maṇḍala* of the Mahayanists. There are two miniature *stūpas* on either side of the Buddha. Interestingly, there are five seal stamps at the back of this rounded piece.

It is interesting to note that Buddhist sites like Nalanda and Bodhagaya have yielded a large number of this type of the terracotta plaques with illegible inscriptions in three lines. The shapes are mostly of the oval with pointed top formation. Some are like leaves with

### **Some interesting Terracotta Plaques from Thailand and Burma**

long stems. They likewise bear figures of the Buddha, bodhisattvas and miniature *stūpas* along with the *sikhara* motifs as well as peepal leaves. Several of these have seal-stamps at the back. Artistically, the plaques are mostly datable to the 10th century C.E.

The abundance of this type of plaques in all these Buddhist sites naturally arouses curiosity as to the reason behind their large-scale production. They might have been produced as mementoes for the pious pilgrims. But why the particular shape? Did it serve any purpose as the *Vajrayānic* symbol ‘Mani padme’ or were these given by the priests to the pious devotee as *prasāda* which could fill up the palm of the receiver?

Whatever might have been the reason behind their production it establishes the strong religio-cultural relationship between the countires of South-East Asia and the Indian sub-continent, although, as a historical source, these are reffered to as minor objects.

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Plate-1



Plate-2



Plate-3

Some interesting Terracotta Plaques from Thailand and Burma



Plate-4



Plate-5



Plate-6



Plate-7

# Changing Dynasties, Enduring Genealogy: A Critical Study on the Political Legitimation in Early Medieval Kāmarūpa

JAE-EUN SHIN

In spite of the fact that there are increasing numbers of works on the regional history of North-East India, the dominant trend in writing of political history of Kāmarūpa has been towards dynastic, genealogical and chronological reconstruction. According to the epigraphic records of three different dynasties of Kāmarūpa from the fourth to the twelfth century A.D. (the Bhauma-Varmans, the Mlechhas and the Pālas),<sup>1</sup> though the origin and ethnic identity of each ruling family are still obscure, it is persistently claimed that they were descendants of Naraka, a son born in the union of the Earth and Viṣṇu in his Varāha incarnation. The mighty warrior Bhagadatta of the *Mahābhārata* was said to be a son of Naraka and Vajradatta was mentioned to be either a son or brother of Bhagadatta in several inscriptions. Based on the epigraphic evidences and Puranic records, particularly the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, scholars have tried to reconstruct the ‘successive and continuous line’ of genealogy of Kāmarūpa and sought for a certain ‘historicity’ of the mythical progenitor, Naraka.<sup>2</sup>

For instance, it is claimed that Naraka was ‘either the adopted son of king Janaka or his illegitimate issue through a courtesan’ (Baruah 2002: 91). Some scholars considered Naraka as ‘a historical personage’ in the end of the third century A.D. whose son was Puṣyavarman (Shastri 2002: 45), or ‘a political adventurer’ who established himself in power somewhere between 200-500 A.D. (Kakati 2003: 29). There was even more farfetched interpretation claiming the presence of ‘several Narakas’ or ‘the Naraka dynasty’.<sup>3</sup> Emphasis often laid on the lengthy and glorious history of Kāmarūpa in ancient times, especially the Bhauma-Varman dynasty. That is often identified as the period to which some historians traced the ethnic and cultural root of pre-Ahom Assam. Therefore, ‘racial’ (or ‘ethnic’) affiliation of Naraka and his descendants has been one of the important issues in the historical writings. Various speculations were posited; Naraka was a Dravidian (Vasu 1998: I. 122) and Kāmarūpa was probably a Dravidian Kingdom (Barua 1966: 25ff.); he was a powerful Kirāta chief who rose into prominence in the proto-historic period. (Das 2006: 3); and he was one of the Aryans who were the traditional rulers of Assam (Choudhury 1966: 6). However, it is nearly impossible to identify Naraka and to determine his date notwithstanding attempts of several historians to do so. In fact, most of such attempts have led to the arbitrary historicizing of mythical figures and the considerable juggling with chronological tables and fragments of legends.

As was emphasized by Thapar, traditional genealogies are rarely faithful records of times past. Their primary function and purpose perhaps lie elsewhere. This is not to deny their chronological dimension, but, rather, to suggest that genealogies provide elements

of other facets of society as well and these facets have often been ignored in the study of genealogical material from Indian sources (Thapar 1978: 286). In this paper, I would like to move away from the chronological reconstruction of genealogy of Kāmarūpa. Rather, I will try to deconstruct the successive line of genealogy and discuss the process of making of genealogy through which unrelated figures of epics and early *Purāṇas* were linked on purpose and different descriptions of events were forged and reinterpreted in a new narrative.

## II

Firstly, let me begin with the *Mahābhārata*. Unlike the later records, the important four figures of royal genealogy of Kāmarūpa, viz. Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu, Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta, are described in an isolated manner in the *Mahābhārata*. There are few accounts connecting those four figures and their relationships are mostly left undefined.

As to Naraka, it is said that he resided in a great citadel, Prāgjyotiṣa and was called Bhauma [the son of Bhūmi]. He stole away the bejeweled ear-rings of 'Aditi'. The gods led by Indra could not defeat him in war because of his valour. Finally, Kṛṣṇa earned great fame by killing Bhauma Naraka along with Mura and by recovering the ear-rings (Sukthankar 1942: Udyogaparvan, 47, 74-79). Again in the same parvan (128. 44-45), we are told that Kṛṣṇa killed Naraka, who had lived for several *yugas*, at Prāgjyotiṣa and rescued thousands of damsels from his control whom later he wedded. These episodes find place in the later Puranic and epigraphic records again and again.

Although the later records invariably refer to Naraka's birth from the union of Viṣṇu in his Varāha incarnation and the Earth, the *Mahābhārata* mentions only the mother of Naraka. In a story explaining how Naraka became invincible, it is clearly stated that Pṛthivī asked Viṣṇu to give Naraka, *her son*, Vaiṣṇavāstra (the weapon of Viṣṇu) to protect him from *devas* and *asura* (Sukthankar 1958: Dronaparvan, 28, 27-32). The fact that Vaiṣṇavāstra was bestowed on Naraka may allude to a certain relation between Viṣṇu and him, but their relationship is undefined in this context.

The very rudimentary stage of genealogy of Naraka is noticed in the *Harivaiśa*. In the description of Kṛṣṇa's merit such as recovering Aditi's ear-rings and defeating Naraka, the following is recorded as Bhūmi's speech addressed to Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva after he killed Naraka: "Oh, Govinda! *Naraka was given by you* and killed by you (*dattas tvay aiva govinda tvay aiva vinipātitah*)" (Vaidya 1969: 91, 59). It implicitly suggests that Viṣṇu was the actual father Naraka, however, their relationship is not explained with details. Therefore, the narrative claiming Naraka's close relation with Viṣṇu must be regarded as later creation.<sup>4</sup> It is argued that the legend of Naraka being born of Varāha and Bhūmi probably developed after the Gupta period because the worship of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* and his *avatāra* theory becoming popular in the Gupta age (Sircar 1990: 85).

In comparison with Naraka, Bhagadatta, the mighty hero in the Bhārata war, is described in a less mythical manner. In most episodes related to Bhagadatta, he is said to have been the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa (*prāgjyotiṣ-ādhipa*) and a powerful warrior who joined the Kaurava side against Pāṇḍavas in the Bhārata war. It is mentioned that he, accompanied by his army comprising the Cīnas, the Kirātas and other warriors, went to fight in aid of Duryodhana (Sukthankar 1942: Udyogaparvan, 19, 15). He is said to have attended the Rājasūya ritual of Yudhiṣṭhira with his followers from the Mlecchas living along the sea coast (*mlecchaiḥ sāgar-ānūpavāsibhiḥ*) (Sukthankar 1944: Sabhāparvan, 31, 9-10). Moreover, Bhagadatta himself is called ‘dwelling in the eastern sea (*pūrvasāgara-vāsin*)’ (Sukthankar 1942: Udyogaparvan, 4, 11) as well as ‘having his abode in the mountain (*Saila-ālaya*)’ (Sukthankar 1948: Strīparvan, 23, 10). In other place, he is called the lord of mountain (*parvat-ādhipa*) (Sukthankar 1958: Dronaparvan, 28, 10).

On the basis of these accounts, scholars have continuously posited the vast territory of Bhagadatta’s kingdom, viz. Prāgjyotiṣa in the eastern region. (Bhattacharya 1931: 2. note., Gait 1926: 4, Barua 1966: 7, Choudhury 1966: 44-45, Barua 1986: 11, Vasu 1998: 134, Shastri 2002: 18-19, Baruah 2002: 74 and so on). However, unlike many scholars’ assertions, the geographical location of Prāgjyotiṣa is not clearly defined in the *Mahābhārata*. In the section describing *dig-vijaya* of the four Pāṇḍava brothers, Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotiṣa, is mentioned as ‘one of the powers in the northern region who resisted Arjuna’ (Sukthankar 1944: Sabhāparvan, 23, 18-25). It means that Prāgjyotiṣa might locate in the Northern Division of India, called ‘Udīchya or Uttarāpatha’ comprising the region between the Eastern Panjab and the Oxus in the north-west as well as the entire Himalayan region (Sircar 1990: 61). On the other hand, we are also told that when Bhīma set out the East and conquered many places such as Kosala, Ayodhyā, Malla, Kāśi, Matsya, Malaya, Vatsa, Niṣāda, Videha, Vaṅga and Tāmralipti, he finally reached the Lauhitya (the Brahmaputra) and compelled the Mleccha kings and dwellers of sea coast (Sukthankar 1944: Sabhāparvan, 27, 1-27). The king Bhagadatta of Prāgjyotiṣa, however, is not mentioned in this context. Besides, the reference that ‘Bhagadatta came to the court of Yudhiṣṭhira on the occasion of his Rājasūya ritual with Yavanas to give presents including fast-moving horses of excellent breed’ (Sukthankar 1944: Sabhāparvan, 47, 12-14) rather alludes to his possible affiliation to West India. It reminds us about the *Rāmāyaṇa*’s reference to Prāgjyotiṣa in which the city is said to have located in the west.<sup>5</sup>

According to these early epic accounts, it is certain that there was no fixed idea of the geographical location of Prāgjyotiṣa. It is mostly uncertain and various. Prāgjyotiṣa was the legendary citadel of demon Naraka or the kingdom of Bhagadatta which might locate in the East, the North, the West, or somewhere else. However, in any case, it is difficult to accept ‘the historical presence of Bhagadatta’s kingdom, Prāgjyotiṣa’ because this postulation was not corroborated by any material evidences. In fact, there are no reliable

sources which certainly verify whether the north eastern region experienced the early state formation before the fourth century A.D.<sup>6</sup>

As regards the genealogy of Bhagadatta, the *Mahābhārata* does not refer to any special relationship between Bhagadatta and Naraka. Unlike the later records in which Bhagadatta is often represented as a son of Naraka, the *Mahābhārata* mentions that he was born from a limb of *asura* called Bāśkala (Sukthankar 1933: Ādiparvan, 67, 2), and he was called a great demon (*mahāsura*) (Sukthankar 1958: Dronaparvan, 38, 34). The only point which may associate him with Naraka is Vaiśṇavāstra. It is said that after blocking the weapon of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna how this weapon, which was previously given to Naraka, came to Bhagadatta (referred to as Prāgjyotiṣa) (Sukthankar 1958: Dronaparvan, 28, 33). Nevertheless, how Bhagadatta received the weapon from Naraka is not explained in this context. As the relationship between Viṣṇu and Naraka was uncertain, the relationship between the latter and Bhagadatta was not defined.

On the other hand, the relation between Bhagadatta and Vajradatta seems to be somehow clear, though there are two different references to a son of Bhagadatta in the *Mahābhārata*. It is said that after the death of Bhagadatta in the Bharata war, his son named Kṛtaprajña was killed by Nakula (Sukthankar 1954: Karṇaparvan, 4, 29). In other place, we are also told that Vajradatta, a king of Prāgjyotiṣa and a son of Bhagadatta (Sukthankar 1960: Āśvamedhikaparvan, 74, 2-3), was defeated by Arjuna. However, in none of the later records there is any reference to a son of Bhagadatta named Kṛtaprajña (Sharma 1978: 0.8). In comparison with the later epigraphic records in which Vajradatta alone is named as a son of Bhagadatta, the *Mahābhārata* gives a vague idea of the genealogy of Bhagadatta. Only in the *Harsacarita*, a third name Puṣpadatta is mentioned between Bhagadatta and Vajradatta. Though it is speculated that Kṛtaprajña might have been identical with Puṣpadatta, who could not become the king due to an early demise in the battle, as such could not also find any mention in the later records (Sharma 1978: 8).

### III

Those unrelated or very loosely related figures in the *Mahābhārata*, viz. Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu, Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta, came to be placed in the unilineal line of sacred genealogy of the Bhauma-Varmans known as the earliest dynasty of the Brahmaputra Valley.<sup>7</sup> This genealogy seems to have been claimed at least from the seventh century A.D. (Sircar 1990b: 95), since it is noticed for the first time in the Dubi and the Nidhanpur C. P. of Bhāskaravarman,<sup>8</sup> and in the *Harsacarita*. The claim was not found in the earlier Umāchal and Bargaṅgā inscriptions of the time of Bhāskaravarman's ancestors.

The contents of genealogy represented in the Dubi and the Nidhanpur C. P. are more or less similar (Sharma: 1978, 10-19 and 40-49). Both inscriptions begin with the eulogy to Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta. It is said that Naraka was born of the contact between

the Varāha and the Earth when he rescued her from the ocean. Both records highly praise Naraka and describe him as not *asura* but ‘all powerful on earth being the king of kings’ (*narakuh kṣitau kṣitibhujānrājādhirājo vibhuḥ*) (Sharma 1978: 11, Dubī C. P. v. 2) or ‘the chief of the rulers of the earth (*phārthivā-vṛndārko*) (Sharma 1978: 41, Nidhanpur C. P. v.4). Then, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta are mentioned as his son and grandson respectively. Vajradatta was followed by several other kings after whom Puṣyavarman came to power. And thereafter his lineal descendants up to Bhāskaravarman are eulogized. It is noteworthy that Varāha, Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta are represented as their great ancestors in the records, but none of them are closely associated with Prāgjyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa. Whereas the king Puṣyavarman is called the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa (*prāgjyotisendru-puṣyavarmanā*) in the seal attached to the Dubī C. P. (Sharma 1978: 33, line 2) and the Nālandā clay seals (Sharma 1978: 35, line 1-2), those four figures are described in a more mythical manner. It seems that the actual progenitor of dynasty was considered to be Puṣyavarman and the four figures had meaning as his mythical ancestors.

The fact that they are supposed descent from the demon Naraka probably indicates the indigenous origin of the ruling family, though converted to the orthodox brahmanical religion (Majumdar 1962: 88). As Gupta rightly pointed out, it is possible that when Gupta power weakened, the Varman rulers asserted themselves not only politically by performing horse sacrifices, but also culturally by announcing their semidivine origin. A suitable genealogy, worthy of being recognized by all, came to be fabricated at that time. Thus the Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇas* of the fifth to sixth centuries A.D. seem to have played important role not only in the process of Sanskritization of Varmanś but also in strengthening their hands in laying the foundation of a strong state (Gupta 1992-93: 4).

Especially, during the reign of Bhāskaravarman, the Bhauma-Varmans reached the zenith of their political power and territorial expansion in the region. As was well known, Bhāskaravarman made a political alliance with the king Harṣa, defeated Śaśāṅka and ruled over Karṇasuvarṇa, the capital of the Gaudas. The brahmanical ideology such as *varnāśrama-dharma* and *ārya-dharma* was particularly emphasized during his reign. (Sharma 1978: 42 Nidhanpur C. P. line. 35 and 37) Besides, the agrarian expansion proceeded significantly in the peripheral area and the regional state formation seems to have reached in a crucial phase during this period.

In this context, a suitable sacred genealogy for the great king, Bhāskaravarman was probably re-formulated and became a fixed tradition. The making of royal genealogy was not so unique to Kāmarūpa. It is argued that in the post-Gupta period, many local dynasties had sought political validation and there was rush for or fabrication of genealogies providing the *Sūryavamśī* or *Candravamśī* origin of local dynasties. This is evident from the genealogies of the Rajput kings; even more interesting is the case of the Gonds of central

India associated with the Candella kings who claimed *Candravaiśī* status (Thapar 1978 a: 119-20).

The sacred genealogy seems to have operated in various ways. Firstly, it asserted the reputation of Bhāskaravarman when he sought for a political alliance with the king Harṣa. The genealogy of Bhāskaravarman was narrated by Haüsavega, the envoy of Bhāskaravarman in the court of Harṣa when the envoy conveyed his master's will to make friendship with Harṣa (Cowell 1993: 216-17). Secondly, it impressed the Chinese monk Hsuan Tsang who visited to Kāmarūpa in the early seventh century A.D. Hsuan Tsang emphasized the lengthy history of Bhāskaravarman's family and wrote that the king belongs to the old line of Narayaṇa-devā and sovereignty over the country was transmitted in the Bhauma-Varman family for 1000 génération (Beal 1994: pt. II, 196). Thirdly, it legitimized the sovereignty of Bhāskaravarman. The Nidhanpur C. P (Sharma 1978: 43, line, 47-8) mentions that Bhāskaravarman has 'the power of splendour (*prabhāvaśakti*) exhibited by the elevation of the rank obtained through the succession of the son of Vasumatī (i.e. Earth).' It denotes that the resource of his power was the lineage of Naraka.

By the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century A. D. political power passed from the hands of the Bhauma-Varmans to the Mlecchas (or alternatively the line of Śālastambha). Though the political transition in Kāmarūpa from the Bhauman-Varmans to the Mlecchas and ethnic identity of the latter have been a subject considerable controversy, it is mostly considered that the Mlecchas are local inhabitants. It is argued that Śālastambha may have been a local tribal chief originally owing allegiance to the king(s) of Bhauma-Varmans and successfully utilized the opportunity of extirpating his overlord. 'Mleccha' may be the Sanskritized form of the tribal name 'Mech' in this case (Sircar 1990b: 122).

The Hāyunthal C. P. of Harjaravarman, which is the one of earliest epigraphic records of the dynasty so far discovered, possibly dated the middle of the ninth century A.D., says ".... therefore, Oh Pārthiva! Your future descendants will, for this reason, be called Mlecchas" (Sharma 1978: 90, v. 2). It may be suggested that a story was fabricated by the *brāhmaṇas* at the court of these kings to explain away their aboriginal origin (Sircar 1990b: 124), though the content of story was not known due to the corroded portion. Nevertheless, the Mlecchass also sought their political validation from the lineage of Naraka. The term 'pārthiva' appeared in the Hāyunthal plate means not only king, but also a progeny of Pṛthivī, which suggests that the king, who is addressed here, belongs to Naraka family. Therefore, some scholars claimed that the Mlecchas and the Bhauma-Varmans were of "common descent or at least belonged to the same political tradition" because "like the Bhauma-Varman family, the line of Śālastambhas also traced their ancestry from king Naraka" (Lahiri 1991: 75).

It is, however, unlikely that there was a certain connection between the Bhauma-Varmans and the Mlecchas. All inscriptional records which were issued in the reign of the Mleccha kings kept silent on the Bhauma-Varman rulers and their lineage. Rather, the Mlecchas associated themselves directly with the mythical ancestor Naraka and his son Bhagadatta in order to gain their own political legitimacy. This fact alludes that the mythical story of Naraka must have gained in increasing popularity and became well-established tradition in the region.

The epigraphic records of the Mlecchas give us more or less similar list of the genealogy of their ancestors. Nevertheless, several significant differences are noticed in the portion describing Naraka and Bhagadatta, and they show how the legend was re-interpreted and re-formulated within a tradition. Firstly, the life of Naraka is quite well represented with the elaborate episodes—such as his birth from the union of Varāha and Bhūmi, his misdeed, *viz.* stealing ear-rings from Aditi, and his death brought by Krṣṇa—in the Tezpur, the Parbatīyā, the Uttarbarbil, and the Nowgong C. P. (Sharma 1978: 97, 116, and 129). Most of records are assigned to the ninth century A. D. In comparison with the former records, they keep various facets of Naraka myth which were employed from the *Harivāśa* and other Vaiṣṇava *Purāṇas*. It seems that Mlecchas tried to represent the entire life of Naraka, from his birth to death, in their records in order to emphasize the authenticity of their version of Naraka story.

Secondly, the character of Naraka is slightly changed with some sense of historicity. In the Uttarbarbil and the Nowgong C. P. in the reign of Balavarman III, which are dated the last quarter of the ninth century A. D., Naraka is described as not only a son of Varāha and Bhūmi, but also one who has Kāmarūpa conquered (*jitakāmarūpah*) (Sharma 1978: 129, v. 5).<sup>9</sup> It is likely that they began to suppose Naraka as an outsider who conquered the kingdom Kāmarūpa in some time and took up his abode there. This point was far more elaborated and historicized in the later *Kālikā Purāṇa* around the eleventh century A.D. His close association with Kāmarūpa is described in the record as follows: “That (Naraka), who has conquered Kāmarūpa used to live in a city named Prāgjyotiṣa in Kāmarūpa” (Sharma 1978: 129-30, v. 5). Whereas the records of the Bhauma-Varmans claimed the universal kingship of Naraka, those of the Mlecchas rather emphasized his regional affiliation. Indeed, the regional factors came to be significantly recognized and mentioned in the epigraphic accounts of the Mleccha dynasty.<sup>10</sup> This point may be attested by the fact that most records of the Mlecchas begin with adoration to the ‘Lauhitya River’ (Brahmaputra) and paid homage to the river (Sharma 1978: 96, v.1 ; 116, v.1 ; 129, v.2).

Thirdly, Bhagadatta is also closely associated with Prāgjyotiṣa. He is called the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa (*prāgjyotiṣādhiraṄya* or *prāgjyotiṣādhiṇātha*) in the Tezpur and the Parbatīyā C. P. (Sharma 1978: 97, v.5 ; 116, v.5). In the Uttarbarbil C. P. (Sharma 1978: 130, v.7), he is referred to as the overlord of vassal kings and the regulator of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It

is likely that the idea of ideal king governing over a regional kingdom was retrospectively imposed on their far remote past. An important point is that Prāgjyotiṣa mentioned in the records of the Mlecchas denotes not only the mythical citadel of Naraka or the kingdom of Bhagadatta appeared in the *Mahābhārata*, but also a historical city located in the kingdom Kāmarūpa as we have seen in the Uttarbarbil C. P. In this way, an elusive legendary city, Prāgjyotiṣa, in the epics was brought into the actual geographical map of Kāmarūpa.

The Mleccha dynasty came to an end with the death of Tyāgasimha and Brahmapāla seems to have obtained the throne of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa about 900 A. D. The descendant of Brahmapāla had names ending in the word *pāla* and the dynasty came to be known as the Pāla dynasty (Sircar 1990b: 141). In spite of the fact that Brahmapāla was the founder of a new line of kings, there was continuity in certain broad trends from the earlier period. The most significant affinity, of course, was that the Pālas also traced their ancestry from Naraka and his family. Most of the episodes related to Naraka were well narrated and the achievement of Naraka and his two sons (Bhagadatta and Vajradatta) was highly praised in the epigraphic records of the Pālas. However, the making of genealogy and its political validation became far more complicated issue in the time of the Pālas by comparison with previous dynasties.

For instance, after narrating the well-known genealogy from Naraka to Vajradatta, the Bargāon C. P. of Ratnapāla, dated the first half of the tenth century A. D., states as follows: “because of shaking of rules (*vidhi-culunavuśūd*), the lord of Mleccha, Śālastambha, grasped the kingship of kings of Naraka family (*nārukāṇām rājñām*) who were, then, enjoying all the earth through the succession of lineage. In his [Śālastambha’s] line also there were famous kings like Vigrahastambha numbering two times of ten (*viz.* twenty). When the twenty-first king of that line, named Tyāgasimha, retired to heaven without an heir, his subjects (*prakṛiti*), thinking ‘once again, oh, a Bhauma is put as our lord’ (*pururaho bhaumo hi no yujyate*), made Brahmapāla, who was capable of burdening and protecting the earth, [their] king because he was a kinsman [of the Bhaumas] (*sūgundhyāt*) (Sharma 1978: 156 v. 9-10).

This record demonstrates that there were several important changes in the way connecting their present with the past in the beginning of the Pāla dynasty. Firstly, they sought for their political legitimacy by associating themselves directly with not only Naraka himself but also the first ruling family who took him as its progenitor, *viz.* the Bhauma-Varmans. It means that the first dynasty itself became an important source for validating the present political power. In order to legitimize their authority over Kāmarūpa, the former ruling family, the Mlecchas are described as the illegitimate political power, who grasped the kingdom of Naraka because of shaking of rules. Therefore, Brahmapāla, who is claimed to be a kinsman of Bhauma, is represented as a rightful king. In other place in the record, he is called a king of the lineage of the Earth (*avani-kula*), and his son, Ratnapāla, is also

said to belong to the lineage of Naraka (*naraka-ānvaya*) (Sharmā 1978: 156, v.12 and v.15). In order to show their relation with the earlier Bhauma kings, these Pāla rulers added the word *varman* after *pāla* in their names, so that Brahmapāla was also called Brahmapālavarmadeva (Sircar 1990b: 141). Besides, the format of Naraka story represented the records of the Pālas is also nearer to that of the Bhauma-Varmans.

Secondly, the Pāla rulers tried to enhance their legitimization by adopting the political rhetoric in the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla dated to the beginning of the ninth century A.D. while they accepted the conventional genealogy of Naraka. As was well known, the record mentions that Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, was chosen as a king by the subjects (*prakṛti*) (Sircar 1983: 65, line. 6-7), though its historical verification still remains in controversy. This political rhetoric is employed in the Bargaon C. P. with a critical alteration. Unlike Gopāla, who was chosen as a king in order to free the land from anarchy (*mātsya-nyāya*), Brahmapāla became a king because the people thought that a Bhauma would be more suitable ruler for them, and, of course, Brahmapāla himself was considered to be the descendent of Bhaumas. However, as Sircar (1990b: 141) argues, it is difficult to believe that Brahmapāla was actually a descendent of one of the members of Puṣyavarman family, because, in that case, his claim was expected to have been more specific.

The reason why the Pālas of Kāmarūpa adopted the well-known political rhetoric of the Pālas of Bengal can be argued in several aspects: the Pālas' insufficient political basis in Kāmarūpa, the distinctive presence of Bengal Pālas as a new model of kingship and governance, the change of mode of legitimization in East India, the migration of Bengal *brāhmaṇas* into Kāmarūpa and so on. It is suggested that as the Bhauma-Varmans adopted their political ideology from the Guptas, similarly the later rulers from the Mleccha dynasty seem to have imbibed the political concept of contemporary rulers of Bengal and formats of the land-grants document were also nearer to similar documents of the Bengal Pālas (Gupta 1992-93: 11). This tendency seems to have continued in the Pāla dynasty in Kāmarūpa. Nevertheless, the rulers of Kāmarūpa never ceased to call themselves the decedents of Naraka. In the Puṣpabhadrā C. P. of Dharmapāla dated the first half of the twelfth century A.D., the king was referred to as *śrī vārāha* (one who can trace his origin from the Boar incarnation of lord Viṣṇu) (Sharma 1978: 259, line17).

#### IV

Eventually, the most elaborate story of Naraka and his progeny was represented in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*.<sup>11</sup> The whole story is quite extensive: it covers five chapters (from ch. 36 to ch. 40) of the *Purāṇa*. Whereas the epigraphic records provide the core of genealogy, which consists of succession lists or lists of decent groups, the Puranic records offer us the narrative tradition interspersed with genealogy. The narrative tradition, consisting of legends

or the description of incidents, inevitably changed more easily when the social norms changed and when new requirements demanded fresh comment (Thapar 1978: 288). By combining different clusters of myth and adding extra episodes to the succession list, the compiler(s) of the *Kālikā Purāṇa* composed the sacred genealogy of ancient Kāmarūpa, which became a crystallized version of Naraka story in Assam.

As regard the birth of Naraka, we are told that the Varāha begot powerful son on the Earth (Pr̥thivī), but the birth of son was delayed by other gods for the good of the world. Then Earth prayed to Viṣṇu. He assured her that she would deliver a son in the middle of *Tretā-yuga* (Shastri 1992: 36. 6-52). In the meantime, Janaka, the king of Videha got two sons and a daughter at the sacrificial ground. As the daughter remained under the earth, the king had to plough the sacrificial ground. When Sītā came out of a furrow, the Earth told him she would give birth to a son there and requested him to bring this son till his youth. One day, Janaka found a male baby, Naraka, there (Shastri 1992: 37.1-60). It seems that the compiler(s) of the *Kālikā Purāṇa* tried to incorporate the *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition into Naraka legend and fabricate his sacred genealogy through the relation with Sītā and Janaka. In this episode, he is represented as not only a son of Varāha and the Earth, but also the adopted son of Janaka and brother of Sītā.

On the other hand, the *Kālikā Purāṇa* does not ignore the demonic identity of Naraka. He was continuously referred to as ‘asura’ in the *Mahābhārata* and other *Purāṇas*. Thus, the compiler(s) of the *Purāṇa* tried to explain the reason why he became a demon by mentioning that the Earth got Naraka during the period of her impurity (Shastri 1992: 36, 7). It indirectly denotes that he was supposed to be born as a divine being but became a semi-divine being because of his mother’s impurity. Besides, the *Purāṇa* alludes to his Kṣatriya identity. It is said that the sage Gautam named the boy as Naraka because he was lying putting his head on the skull (*ka*) of a man (*nara*) and performed his sacraments according to the method followed in the case of a Kṣatriya (Shastri 1992: 38. 2-3). It is absolutely a new invention of tradition.

His migration from Videha to Prāgjyotiṣa has another significant meaning. The relevant story is presented as follows: Janaka brought up Naraka for sixteen years and trained him as a human being. When Naraka was about to complete his sixteenth year, the Earth took him to the Gaṅgā and narrated him the story of birth. Being eulogized by the Earth, Viṣṇu took Naraka and the Earth to the city of Prāgjyotiṣa through the Gaṅgā. This city was situated in the middle of Kāmarūpa. Naraka waged war against Kirātas, defeated them and eventually made a new kingdom (Shastri 1992: 38.1-117). In fact, Naraka was already referred to as ‘*jitakāmarūpāḥ*’ in the epigraphic records in the last quarter of ninth century A. D. By adding extra episodes to this motif, especially Naraka’s journey through the Gaṅgā, the compiler(s) of the *Purāṇa* perhaps attempted to make a certain geographical connection between Videha and Kāmarūpa, though it is only an imagined connection.

Finally, the most critical development of Naraka story in terms of genealogy is his relation with his father, Viṣṇu and his son, Bhagadatta. Unlike the epigraphic records which mainly mention the paternal line of succession, the *Purāṇa* puts more emphasis on the interaction between father and son. For instance, Viṣṇu is not merely represented as the father of Naraka. He is rather an absolute being who rules over the entire life of Naraka. He ordered Naraka to move to Prāgjyotiṣa, that is the kingdom allotted to him, and fight against the local inhabitants, Kirātas. He forbade Naraka from opposing the sages and the *brāhmaṇas* ever and worshipping any other god or goddess except the goddess Kāmākhyā (Shastri 1992: 38, 98; 38, 106; 38, 146; 38, 149). Besides, He gave Naraka all precious things of Kirāta king, a gigantic chariot, and a special weapon called Śakti (Shastri 1992: 38, 136-41). After Naraka became a friend of Baṇa, a demon, he began to disrespect his father, Viṣṇu, conquered heaven, taken away wealth including Aditi's ear-rings and abducted sixteen thousand heavenly damsels. Finally, Viṣṇu incarnated himself as Kṛṣṇa, went to Prāgjyotiṣa and killed Naraka (Shastri 1992: 40, 1-107).

As Viṣṇu had a close relationship with Naraka, the latter's connection with Bhagadatta is also emphasized in the story. The Earth having seen her son Naraka killed approached Kṛṣṇa and said, "Oh, Govinda!... you have given me the son and you killed him. Please protect his progeny." Kṛṣṇa promised that he would protect son of Naraka, Bhagadatta and anoint him on the throne of Prāgjyotiṣa. After that, he gave the weapon, Vaiṣṇavīśakti, which was previously given to Naraka by Viṣṇu, to Bhagadatta (Shastri 1992: 111-126). As was discussed before, the death of Naraka had been a recurrent theme which was noticed in the *Harivaiśa* and other *Purāṇas*. However, there was no special reference to Naraka's descendants. The Earth's pray for Naraka's descendants is the most likely a new invention of the *Kālikā Purāṇa*. Similarly, the episode of Viṣṇu's weapon was already mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. Though the weapon is said to be given to Bhagadatta, the epic does not give any relevant explanation. We have no idea how the weapon came to him. The composer(s) of the *Kālikā Purāṇa* utilized scattered and unrelated episodes of Naraka and Bhagadatta in the former tradition and made a new narrative for validating the royal genealogy of Kāmarūpa.

To sum up, the genealogy of Naraka had been continued throughout almost five-hundred years in the early medieval Kāmarūpa. However, this continuity does not mean the unilineal development of dynasties or any definite connection among different ruling families. In fact, each dynasty had denied the validity of previous dynasty for claiming their own legitimacy and the character and identity of progenitor, Naraka, were continuously reformulated according to the socio-political changes. The royal genealogy is not a record of the past, but a conceptual device for the present which validates existing political power. And the device still operates in the writing of particular version of history in present Assam.

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### Note

- 1 It is generally postulated that after the decline of the Guptas, the Bhauma-Varman rulers became prominent in the Brahmaputra valley. Puṣyavarman who ruled during the fourth century A.D. was known as the founder of the line. By the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century A.D., political power passed from the hand of the Bhauma-Varmans to the Mlechas (or alternatively the line of Śālastambha). After the Mlechha dynasty came to an end with the death of Tyāgasimha, Brahmapāla became the first king of Pāla dynasty about 900 A.D. The Pālas continued to rule over Kāmarūpa till the twelfth century A.D.
- 2 Indeed, the issue of genealogy of Naraka has been critically connected with the subjective awareness of Assamese identity and their past. Since *The History of Assam* written by Gait had largely disappointed nationalists because of his dismissive attitude to historical source of the pre-Ahom period and lack of attention to the ancient past of Kāmarūpa, some scholars emphasized the lengthy history and continuous political genealogy of Kāmarūpa. (For the importance of Gait's historical writing and various responses of Indian historians to it, See Saikia's recent competent article (Saikia 2008: 141-71)). Bhattacharya, who was one of strong critics of Gait's work, underlined the glorious past of Assam which may go back to the 5000 years ago. He claimed that Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta were flourished 3000 years before Puṣyavarman, and the main line of kings of Kāmarūpa from Bhagadatta up to Bhāskaravarman ruled over the country *without interruption for several millennia* (Bhattacharya 1927: 845 italics mine). Though his assumption is untenable, it has continued to be maintained without significant modifications in the later major historical writings of Assam (e. g. Barua 1966, Barua 1986, Baruah, 2002, Choudhury, 1966 and so on).
- 3 Sarma (1981: 95-6) was of the opinion that there were as many as three monarchs bearing the name Naraka, all of whom ruled in the western region beyond the river Brahmaputra and the last of whom migrated from Videha and established himself in Prāgyotiṣa, and that all this happened prior to the traditional Bhagadatta of the Mahābhārata period. On the other hand, Choudhury (1966: 132 ff.) speculated that Naraka-Bhagadatta was the dynastic name like Janaka and there were 24 or 25 kings of the Naraka-Bhagadatta line probably including the house of Puṣyavarman ruled for about 600 years. He assigned Naraka and Bhagadatta to the first century A.D.
- 4 For example, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (10. 59. 31) is quite explicit on the paternal genealogy of Naraka. After describing the combat between Viṣṇu and Naraka and the latter's defeat and death, it relates how Bhūmi appearing and addressing the god gives him the ear-rings of Aditi. In doing so Bhūmi said: “when you, assuming the form of a boar (*śūkra*) lifted me up, this son, begotten through the contract with you, was born from me” (Cited in Gonda 1969: 142). Almost same story of Nauaka is narrated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as well.

- 5 The *Rāmāyaṇa* (Shastri 1976: II, Kiṣkindhā kāṇḍa, 280) says that Sugrīva asked to Suṣenā to set out in a mission to the west for searching Sītā. While describing the various places to be visited by Suṣenā and his party, Sugrīva also describes the city of Prāgjyotiṣa located on the Varāha Mountain, surrounded by the deep sea and inhabited by Naraka.
- 6 As was well known fact, the Buddhist records of the Mahājanapadas did not mention the name of ancient kingdom, Prāgjyotiṣa or Kāmarūpa. Besides, there is no reference to Prāgjyotiṣa either in the early/later Vedic literatures or in the early Jain works. Kauṭiliya's *Arthaśāstra*, the Periplus of Erythraean Sea, Ptolemy's Geography and other early literary documents speak of economic pursuits of the tribal belt of the north eastern region, but had nothing to say about their kingdoms. Kāmarūpa, which was used as a synonym of Prāgjyotiṣa, is mentioned for the first time in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta assigned to the middle of the fourth century A.D. It refers to Kāmarūpa and Davāka as the lands of frontier kings (*pratyanta nrपatis*) (Sircar 1986: 265). Though, based on this epigraphic record, it can be assumed that state formation perhaps took place in the north eastern region before the advent of the Guptas, the process and scale of state formation could not be verified in the absence of large scale excavation in this area (Gupta 1992-1993: 2-3). Thus, most of theories claiming the ancient kingdom of Bhagadatta in East India are untenable. I have discussed the process of making of the historical region, Prāgjyotiṣa and its socio-historical implication elsewhere (Shin: forthcoming).
- 7 This family is called the Bhauma or the Naraka and also the *avanikula* in a more literary way (Sharma 1978: 0.29).
- 8 The former is assigned to the first quarter of the seventh century A.D. and the latter is dated between 620 and 643 A.D. (Sharma 1978: 10 and 38). Two other inscriptions, viz., the seal attached to the Dubi C. P. and Nālandā clay seals, belonging to the reign of Bhāskaravarman also give the sacred genealogy of the Bhauma-Varmans (Sharma 1978: 33 and 35). However, both records provide only the succession list without giving any detailed information. A noteworthy point is that the Nālandā seals refer to Puṣpadatta between Bhagadatta and Vajradatta while it gives almost similar genealogy of Bhāskaravarman.
- 9 Here, the word *jitakāmarūpa* means one who has surpassed Kāma in beauty (*rupā*) and also one who has conquered the kingdom of Kāmarūpa (Sharma 1978: 137).
- 10 It is also pointed out that non-Sanskrit names for places, rivers, etc. are prominent in the documents of this phase of Kāmarūpa's history and these are in sharp contrast to Sanskritic names which appear in the Nidhanpur inscriptions in the Bhauma-Varman dynasty. Thus, it is considered that a synthesis of brahmanical and local cultural patterns received impetus under the rulers of the Mleccha dynasty and carried further by the Pāla rulers of Kāmarūpa (Gupta 1992-93: 9-10 and 18). Besides, it is important that the presence of a local goddess Kāmākhyā was mentioned in the records of the Mlechhas for the first time (Shin 2010: 8-9).
- 11 It was probably composed before the eleventh century A. D. in Kāmarūpa or in that part of Bengal which was very close to it. See Hazra (1963: 245). On the other hand, Barua (1966: 163) noticed in the text (55. 17) an allusion to the king Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa, and consequently placed the text at the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century A.D. With regard to the geographical provenance of the text see Hazra (1963: 232) and Kooij (1972: 4).

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# **Early Medieval Sites in the Dwarakeswar River Valley, District Bankura: A Review**

**SHARMISTHA CHATTERJEE**

District Bankura presents an interesting picture of archaeological record that highlights the historical significance of the district as a whole. From time immemorial it has been witnessed that the river valleys within the district have been the major areas of concentration for the past habitations. Gradually through the passage of time, the utilisation pattern of the ancient landscape changed with associated changes in technology and infrastructure. The present author has conducted extensive explorations in the Dwarakeswar river valley, covering a substantial part of the district Bankura. The only excavated site of the river valley is Dihar, which has revealed enough evidences of chalcolithic, early historic, early medieval and medieval occupation. The site has been excavated twice and the continuous occupation of the site provides a good groundwork for further research in this area. The consistent explorations conducted by the author in the adjoining areas of the site Dihar, have revealed archaeological sites ranging in chronology from chalcolithic to the medieval period. However, this paper aims at highlighting the early medieval archaeological record of the area. This area revealed substantial evidences of past habitations in the form of ceramics, miscellaneous artefacts together with evidences of remarkable forms of sculptural art, religious establishments as well architectural ruins. Since the area lacks literary data the present archaeological investigations have certainly constituted the essential determinants in reconstructing the historical significance of the district as a whole and with special emphasis on the early medieval period, in particular.

Ceramics is one of the key indices in identifying archaeological sites of different chronological periods. However, the ceramic database not being standardized, it is quite difficult to judge the nature of early medieval ceramics of Bengal. Therefore the explored ceramics from the sites could only be categorized into chalcolithic, early historic and medieval. The present investigation thus remains confined to the archaeological sources associated with sculptural art and few religious and secular establishments.

**Study area:** The study covers the slightly undulating flood plains of Dwarakeswar indicating a transition between the rocky outcrops of the west and the gentler flood plains in the east. It is a rain fed river and originates near the Tilabani hills of Purulia district. It flows through the districts Bankura and Hooghly and in its lower course, below its confluence with the Silabati, it is known as the Rupnarayan. Thereafter it drains into the Bay of Bengal. The river in the present study area exhibits numerous meanders, cut-off channels, back-swamps and levees. The left bank of the river has a continuous stretch of older alluvium. But occasional lateritic outcrops are not uncommon especially on the right bank

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of the river. This area exhibits dendritic drainage pattern and is largely inundated by the river during monsoons (Banerjee 1968). The modern flood plains of the river lying adjacent to the river bed are presently under cultivation.

This zone also has the concentration of Joypur and the Sonamukhi forest ranges. The sites like Kushadwip, Bhara, Birsingha, Sahapur are situated within the dense forest coverage and have been reported as the find-spots of chopper-chopping tools. These sites are reported as richest pre-historic sites in the district after Sususnia (Datta et al. 1992: 65-76). In this area, the principal tributaries of Dwarakeswar are Birai and Amodar. Besides the reported prehistoric sites, black and red ware, early historic and medieval sites have also been discovered in this zone (Chatterjee 2010). The chalcolithic sites in the area including Dihar are found to be concentrated near the water sources. The early historic sites are strictly confined to the riverine flood plains and are distributed in a linear fashion along the river. The medieval sites in the zone are found to be uniformly distributed throughout the flood plains of the river. In some locations, they exhibit compact form of distribution.

The study area constitutes a part of the *Rādha* plains where a lateritic alluvial landscape has developed. The surface is highly undulating and at places there are some step formations. Dwarakeswar, being an old river, we find references of it in the medieval texts like *Kavikarikan Chandi*. Since the study area constitutes a major portion of the *Rādha*, we find its mention in the *Āchārāṅga Sutra* where it is stated that *Mahāvīra* traveled in the pathless country of *Lādha* in *Vajjabhumi* and *Subbhabhumi* in the sixth century BC to propagate the religion (Sen 1942). The Tirumalai inscription also speaks of the area and hence we get indirect references from it. During the reign of Mahipala I, a number of independent kingdoms existed in this region as known from the above mentioned inscription (Hultzsch 1907-08: 229-233) which refers to *Dandabhukti*, *Dakṣiṇa Rādha*, *Uttara Rādha* and *Vanigala* being ruled by Dharmapala, Ranasura, Mahipala and Govindachandra respectively. Ranasura of southern *Rādha* and Dharmapala of *Dandabhukti* might have shared between themselves the territories lying in the modern district of Bankura. The *Prabodhachandrodaya-Nāṭaka* (Act II), written in the eleventh century AD, also speaks of *Dakṣiṇa Rādha*, indicating that before that period *Rādha* was divided into *Uttara* and *Dakṣiṇa Rādha*. The portion on the north of the river Ajay is *Uttara Rādha* and that on the south is *Dakṣiṇa Rādha* (Sen 1942). It can be assumed from these accounts that the present study area formed a part of *Dakṣiṇa Rādha*.

### **Archaeological Potentially of the Area:**

- 1. Dihar (23°07' N, 87°21' E):** Dihar, situated within the Bishnupur subdivision, is the only excavated site of the river valley. It stands on the left bank of the Dwarakeswar river and has been considered to be a significant marker in the present study. The explored sites in the river valley have been placed in proper chronologies on the basis of the artefactual

evidences and ceramic database of Dihar. A periodical excavation programme was undertaken by the department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta under the supervision of A. C. Pal in 1983-5 and 1990-5 (Pal 1992: 101-6). A recent excavation was undertaken by R. K. Chattopadhyay on behalf of the department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta. These excavations established the chronology of the site starting from the Chalcolithic period associated with multimode subsistence economy and continuing till the medieval period (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010: 9-33).

The cultural sequence of the former excavation was established on the basis of numerous findings like ceramic assemblage (black and red ware mostly), terracotta objects, bone tools, microliths, and cast copper coins. On the basis of artefactual evidence and radiocarbon dating, Pal stated that about 1000 BC, the chalcolithic people of Dihar settled in the older alluvium tract watered by the Dwarakeswar (Pal 1992: 101-6). According to him, the material evidence is much in accordance with east Indian chalcolithic sites like Chirand, Sonpur, Mahisdal, Tulsipur and others.

The recent excavation conducted by R. K. Chattopadhyay has helped in understanding the nature of the site in the early medieval and the medieval phase, which has additionally helped in understanding Dihar and its significance (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010: 9-33). On the western periphery of the village, stands the twin temples of *Sadeśwar* and *Saileśwar*. These temples have been the subject of research from time to time; R. D. Banerjee has stressed on the possibility of its establishment in the third phase of temple building activity in the beginning of eleventh century AD (Banerjee 1933, Das 1968-69: 126-8). Apart from these archaeological evidences from Dihar, VSPM (Vishnupur Sahitya Parishad Museum) has a collection of early medieval antiquities comprising stone sculptural fragments, potsherds and terracotta objects from Dihar. Few smaller specimens of *Ganeśa* and other fragmentary sculptures were collected from Dihar datable between 11th century AD—13th century AD (Chattopadhyay et al. 2010: 9-33). Dihar, thus continued to be an important settlement through the passage of time and considerably flourished during the early medieval-medieval period. It is worthwhile to mention that its archaeological database demonstrates the changing identity of Dihar from a secular self sufficient village settlement to a temple dominated nodal centre with possible radiations (Chattopadhyay et.al. 2010: 9-33). It is also known from the medieval records that the *Malla rajas* were specially attached with the *Gājan* festival of this place (Sanyal 1987: 73-142) and Dihar was essentially a place of *Śaiva* religious activities during the medieval period.

**2. Bahulara** ( $23^{\circ}9'55"N$ ,  $87^{\circ}14'8"E$ ): Bahulara stands on the right bank of the Dwarakeswar river between 80 m and 60 m above MSL. Bahulara is a very famous tourist place because of the *Siddheśwar* temple, one of the most vital centres of the worship of *Śiva* within district Bankura. It falls within Onda Block. It was first reported by Beglar followed by others

(Banerjee 1933, Banerjee 1968, Beglar 1994 rep., Singha 1991). *Siva* is worshipped here in the form of *Siddheśwar*. The temple is of *Nāgara* style (*rekha deul* structure).

Few sculptures have also been traced from the site during the course of the present survey. All of them have been reported earlier. The Bahulara specimen of *Mahiṣāsuramardini* is made of chlorite stone measuring 91cm x 63cm. The upper part is highly broken. The goddess is *daśabhujjā* (ten armed). The style is post-Pāla (Pl I). Besides this, images of *Ganeśa* dated between 11th century AD—13th century AD have also been found from the site. A sculpture of *Pārśvanātha* has been reported from the site (Chattopadhyay 2010, Singha 1991). During exploration, eight subsidiary shrines were noted besides the temple. There are some cultivated fields to the south of the temple and in these sections medieval potteries were noted during the course of survey.

**3. Dharapat** (23°0'58"N, 87°17'49"E): Dharapat is situated on the left bank of the river, has been reported earlier by many scholars (Banerjee 1968, Chattopadhyay et al. 2009: 80-5, Singha 1991). It falls within Bishnupur block and stands at 60 m above MSL. A dry channel of Dwarakeswar passes through the vicinity. According to the local sources, the village was actually inhabited by the Jains during which the temple (*rekha deul* structure) of Shyamchand Thakur was constructed.

The present survey has brought to notice the images of two *Tīrthankaras* and an image of *Viṣṇu*, all of which are plaqued on the outer wall of the temple (Pl. VI and VII). A modern temple on the opposite side has a beautifully sculpted specimen of *Pārśvanātha*, though later it has been transformed into that of *Lokesvara Viṣṇu*. The intact *Viṣṇu* image of Dharapat is embedded on the east wall of the shrine called *Nangta Thakurer Mandir*. The life-size image of *Viṣṇu* stands in erect posture on the lotus pedestal. He has four arms holding the attributes of *śarīha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma*, i.e. conch, wheel, mace and lotus. The image is ornamented with a crown (*kirīṭamukuta*) on its head, earrings, necklace, garland, sacred thread and other usual ornaments. He is accompanied by his female attendant deities *Lakṣmī* and *Sarasvatī*. The image is made of blackish stone and is approximately 95 cm in height. It cannot be dated earlier than 11th century AD. The exploration has also revealed very few early historic and profuse amounts of medieval potteries from the exposed sections of the Rauthpara area of the village.

**4. Joykrishnapur** (23°0'26"N, 87°19'1"E): Joykrishnapur lies very close to the above mentioned villages on the left bank of the river at a distance of 3 km and standing at 60 m above MSL. It falls within Bishnupur block. This site is quite significant because it has been surveyed by local enthusiasts, and various archaeological artefacts and sculptures have been collected from the site (Banerjee 1968, Singha 1991). The village has some archaeological ruins occurring on the north eastern part of the locality. A few sculptural remains are preserved in the VSPM, Vishnupur like the sculptures of *Sūrya* (c. eleventh

century AD) and *Cāmuṇḍā* (c. tenth century AD). One *Garuda* capital and a Jain votive temple have also been recovered from the site.

During the present survey, in the Saldanga area of the village, some small mounds were located of which few revealed potsherds in the sections (peripheral areas of the mounds) and in scatters throughout the area. Near the Gopinath Jiu temple also some scatters of medieval potsherds were noted.

**5. Thakurpur** ( $23^{\circ}7'15''\text{N}$ ,  $87^{\circ}19'33''\text{E}$ ): The modern village is situated on the left bank of river Dwarakeswar and stands between 60 m and 40 m above MSL at a distance of 2 km from the river. It falls within Bishnupur block. This site was first reported by Sri Manick Lal Singha. The former name of Dihar was Thakurpur and the present village Dihar formed a part of Thakurpur as observed by Sri Manick Lal Singha (Singha 1991). Near the entrance of the village (northern part), there is a sculpture placed beneath an old banyan tree for regular worship. It is beyond recognition since it is very fragmentary and vermillion and oil have severely damaged the specimen. In this area, some potsherds of the medieval period have also been noted in scatters.

Near the De-Bhata area (brick factory) lying adjacent to the site, there is a *Bhairavi than* (a local term used to denote a place where the local deity *Bhairavi?* is worshipped) where an unidentified fragmentary sculpture is worshipped by the local villagers. The sculpture was found during the removal of soil for construction of the factory. Adjacent to this area, along the agricultural fields, a section was noted revealing two layers of cultural debris in the form of ancient potteries.

**6. Naricha** ( $23^{\circ}6'59''\text{N}$ ,  $87^{\circ}26'04''\text{E}$ ): It is 18 km north-east of Vishnupur. This village has a stone temple known as Sarvamangala Mandir and it houses images of Hindu gods and goddesses. The village is situated on the left bank of the river and is a very prominent village for an annual fair which is held every year in honor of Sarvamangala (a form of *Durgā*). It has been reported as an early medieval site (Chattopadhyay et al. 2009: 80-5).

The Sarvamangala temple is of *chāla* type. At the main entrances on the south and the west, there are two sculptures of *Gaṇeśa* and *Garuda*, the vehicle of *Viṣṇu*, embedded on the top of the wall. The other sculptural pieces are lying inside the temple. The sculptures are fairly in a good state of preservation. There is another broken or abraded piece of sculpture representing the figure of *Mahiṣāsuramardini*, now kept under a banyan tree at the locality of Bamunpara in the village. Two other *Mahiṣāsuramardini* images have also been recovered from the village and are currently being worshipped within the temple premises. The first one is also of chlorite stone and measures 86cm x 53cm. The goddess has eight arms and the style of execution indicates that the image belonged to about 13th century AD or even late (Chattopadhyay 2010). The sculpture that is worshipped as Sarvamangala is similar to the former one (eight armed) (81cm x 43 cm). A sculpture

is of *Ganēśa* (68cm x 38cm) and a sculpture of *Vāsudev* (10 cm) has also been recovered from the site. The river sections within the village premises have also revealed huge number of potteries belonging to the medieval period.

A two handed image of *Manasā*, made of chlorite stone measures 53cm x 20cm. The deity is seated on a double-petalled lotus in *lalitāsana* posture, under the canopy of seven serpent hoods. The goddess holds a snake in her left hand, while the right hand is in *varada-mudrā*. On stylistic grounds, the image is of a later date assignable to 12th—13th centuries AD (Chattopadhyay 2010, Pl.VIII).

**7. Salda** (23°3'8"N, 87°27'44"E): Salda is situated on the right bank of the river at a distance of 8 km from the river Dwarakeswar. It falls within Joypur block. Salda-Gokulnagar-Padumpur forms a complex from the time when Padumpur was supposedly the capital of the *Malla rajas*. The site has been reported earlier by the scholars due to the findings of early-medieval sculptures (Chattopadhyay et al. 2009: 80-5, Chattopadhyay 2010, O'Malley 1995, Singha 1991). This complex of sites is also dotted with numerous canals and tanks constructed probably during the early medieval period or during the reign of the *Malla rajas* for better management of water. The village is divided into two halves Upor Salda and Namo Salda.

At Manasatala within the present village, there are some broken sculptures lying under a Neem tree which are still worshipped by the villagers. Among all these broken sculptures, one can identify an image of *Lakulīśa*, a fragment of *Lokeśvara Viṣṇu* image and two other sculptures in fragments. At a distance of 100 meters through the same village road, one reaches the dilapidated and unfinished small brick temple structure where the folk deity *Basuli* is worshipped. In this temple (Basuli mandir) two images of *Basuli* and *Tīrthankaras* are enshrined. The upper portions of these installed images are visible while their lower parts are buried under the earth (Chattopadhyay 2010). A late medieval temple, within the village houses a stone sculpture of *Umā-Maheśvara* which is still worshipped by the local people as *Manasā* (Banerjee 1968, Chattopadhyay 2010).

Apart from the sculptural remains of upper Salda, in the lower Salda area there is a cluster of temple ruins located on the bank of a large tank. The first ruined temple complex is called Bhubaneswar which enshrines a large *Siva Linga*. On the other side of a large tank, there is another small stone temple known as Gandheswara which was probably built earlier than the Bhubaneswar temple. This temple enshrines a *Siva Linga* known as Gandheswara. Inside the temple there is another well executed and well-preserved stone image of *Mahiśāsuramardini*. It is made of chlorite stone and measures 45cm x 29cm. The goddess is represented as stepping to the right and vigorously attacking the demon *Mahiśa*. She wears a *ratnamukuta*, necklace, armlets and other ornaments. Stylistically it may be dated to c. 11th century AD (Chattopadhyay 2010). Near the Gandheswara temple, there is a flat-roofed modern temple known as Shankhasur Dharam Thakurer Jeu Mandir containing a few

damaged stone sculptures. A specimen of *Bhairava* was also noticed during the present survey. The god has eight hands and wears a garland made of skulls, a necklace, earrings and a crown. It is stylistically dated around 11th century AD (Chattopadhyay 2010).

The presence of *Lakuliśa* images in Salda and other areas of Bankura attest to similar development in Orissa and adjoining parts of Jharkhand. According to Chattopadhyay, the tantric gods and goddesses found in Bankura, tend to show that it was an extension of similar contemporary developments centering around the Khijjingesvari temple complex of Mayurbhanj (Chattopadhyay 2010). The sculpture of *Vārāhī* found at Salda exhibits a finely executed image of *Vārāhī*, seated on a bejeweled buffalo (Pl.IV). The entire representation stands on a *pañcha-ratha* pedestal and carved against a hollow stele. The principal pot bellied figure is four armed, one of which is holding an indistinct object. The other attributes cannot be identified since they are broken. She is adorned with a necklace and earrings. Stylistically this image also has enough similarities with the sculptural art of Orissa.

Besides these, there are some other antiquities sporadically occurring at different places of the village. Medieval potteries were traced from the site during the present survey conducted by the author. Thus the archaeological remains recorded from Salda indicate its potentiality of being a major early medieval site of the district. This complex of sites (Salda-Gokulnagar-Padumpur) standing on local lateritic outcrops, show compact form of settlements with quite a few number of tanks and canals amidst the densely forested areas of Joypur.

**8. Gokulnagar** ( $23^{\circ}2'21''N$ ,  $87^{\circ}27'43''E$ ): The village is well known for its laterite Pancaratna shrine of Gokulchand. The village is located about one km south of Salda. The huge temple of this village was built by the *Malla* ruler of Vishnupur, in the 17th century AD (Banerjee 1968). Besides, the place has yielded an image of the *Varāha* incarnation of *Viṣṇu*. This specimen is lying on the bank of a local pond. The lower part of the specimen is buried under the earth and was recently cemented. This *Varāha* *avatar* from Gokulnagar is adorned with a *mukūṭa* (crown) on the head and usual ornaments, such as elaborate *hāra* (necklace) around the neck, with *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread) and *udarabandha* (girdle) round the body, *keyūras* (armlets) and with *balayas* (bracelets); *dhoti* (cloth) and *vanamālā* (garland). The image is made of chlorite stone, its visible part measuring 68cm x 53cm (Pl. IX).

The image of *Anantaśayana Viṣṇu* which is now preserved in the VSPM, Vishnupur was found from the Gokulchand temple, Gokulnagar. It measures 92cm x 45cm x 18cm. The god is found recumbent on the folds of *Ādi* or *Ananta Nāga*, the five hoods of the latter serving as a canopy over his head. There are nine other figures in a row around the God. The God has four arms. He wears a *kirītamukūṭa* on the head and an elaborate *hāra* (necklace), *vanamālā* (garland), *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread), *dhoti* (cloth), *udarabandha* (girdle), *keyūras* (armlets) etc. This is similar to the stone carvings of the Pāla period.

This image was noticed by J. C. French on the outer wall of the temple. In 1961, with the help of A. K. Banerjee, the then collector of Bankura, the VSPM, Vishnupur acquired the specimen (Banerjee 1968, Chattopadhyay 2010, Singha 1991). The findings of Jain sculptures (*Tirthankaras*) were also reported from the village. As far as the ceramic assemblage is concerned, some stray occurrence of medieval sherds has been noted within the village which is not properly confined to a particular place.

**9. Andra** ( $23^{\circ}13'11''N$ ,  $87^{\circ}34'33''E$ ): Andra lies about two km east of Kankardanga near Patrasayer and is farthest from the site Dihar. The archaeological remains comprising the temple ruins and a sculpture apparently of 12th century AD are located at the north western corner of the village. It is situated on the river Sali, a tributary of the river Damodar. The river Damodar flows a few km north of the temple ruins. The place which is known as Sivadanga is now seen as a high mound with traces of a brick temple. The entire area is scattered with temple ruins, potsherds, fragmentary ring wells and minor terracotta pieces. The height of the mound is about 50 ft from the ground level. Early historical potteries were collected from the peripheral areas of the mound in an exposed context and as surface scatters from the top of the mound. Medieval sherds have also been collected from this mound area which indicates the continuous occupation of the site. Andra gives us the only evidence of an existing mound, from where early historical potteries have been found.

At the top of the mound there is an erect image of *Sūrya* placed in the centre. According to the local tradition the image was enshrined in the temple. The image from Andra is slightly damaged and abraded and is made of chlorite stone. It measures 97cm x 52cm. The god stands in erect position and his cloth descends down to the knees and a second piece of tight cloth round the waist is highly ornamented. He holds two lotuses in two hands. Bearded, pot-bellied *Piṅgala*, stands on the left side of the god holding an indistinct object. *Dandī* is seen on the right hand side. A pair of flying *Vidyādhara*s is found on the two sides of the image (Pl. V). According to Chattopadhyay, the image may rightly belong to c. 11th century AD (Chattopadhyay 2010).

Besides all these above-mentioned sites, numerous scattered remains of sculptures and architectural ruins have been traced from other sites in the adjoining areas of Dihar, located along the Dwarakeswar river valley. The piece of *ekamukha linga* recorded from Bhatra (P.S. Vishnupur, no.10 in map) is cylindrical in shape with a *gaūripatti* or *yonipīṭha*. The central upper part is carved with the image of a female deity (Singha 1991, Pl. III). The facial part is slightly worn out. On stylistic grounds, it may be assigned to c. 11th—12th centuries AD. The village Hadal-Narayanpur (P.S. Patrasayer) has revealed sculptural remains belonging to the early medieval-medieval period. There are images of Jaina *Yakṣa-Yakṣinī*, *Siva linga*, an image of *Pārvatī* and a number of small unidentified images (Chattopadhyay 2010). An image of *Viṣṇu* has also been noted at the modern village of Basubati (no. 11 in map) which has an extant mound that is strewn with ancient potteries

(Pl. II). A fragmentary specimen of *Manasā* has also been noted near the Vaishnav Danga area of the same village. The *Varāha avatar* image from Ekteswar (P.S. Bankura, no.12 in map) is made of chlorite stone and stands on a double-petalled lotus under a canopy of seven snake-hoods. Several antiquities ranging in chronology from prehistoric to early medieval times have also been reported from the sites Kushadwip (no. 13 in map), Bhara and Shahpur (Chattopadhyay 2010, Datta 1992: 65-76, Singha 1991).

During the present survey, a rare specimen of *Bhairava* has been found from Mulkari, where except the upper part, the entire image is lost. It is made of reddish stone which has rarely been used in sculptures from Bankura. The remaining part measuring 40cm x 38cm shows the face of the mustached and bearded deity with its staring eyes, slightly open mouth showing fangs, and its head adorned with coiled hairs rising upwards like flames. The image is decorated with few ornaments including a conical *mukuta* (crown), elaborate necklace, roundish earrings, armlets etc. This sculpture also indicates an Orissan stylistic affinity and is currently housed in the VSPM, Vishnupur.

Bankura also abounds in Jaina sculptures which indicate that the religion could inflict profound influence in the substantial part of the district including the present study area. This influence can well be comprehended from the early historic times (as early as sixth century B.C.) where we do get literary references of the propagation of Jainism in the *Rādha* area by Mahāvīra (Sen 1942). During the present course of survey, *Pārvatī* images were recorded from the sites Bahulara, Harmasra (*Candraprabha*), Dharapat and Ekteswar. However, Jainism was not very popular during the early medieval period because of the predominance of the Brahmanical form of religion.

**Observations:** The explored archaeological sites in the Dwarakeswar river valley and in the adjoining areas of Dihar help to form a preliminary idea of the early medieval archaeological record and its relevant historical significance. In absence of epigraphic records, it is quite difficult to elaborate on the settlement history of the region. Dihar has undoubtedly been one of the most vital sites of this area since the chalcolithic period. This site sustained its importance till the medieval period with the coming of the *Mallas* and might have helped other sites in the adjoining areas to develop gradually. Besides the above mentioned ones, there are many more sites in the river valley that have revealed only potteries, (Chatterjee 2010) with no evidences of sculptural art or architectural remains. Since the early medieval ceramic database remains unutilised in the present endeavour, it cannot be said with certainty about the early medieval occupation of these sites revealing artefactual evidences only in the form of potteries. Hence in such cases, the entire assemblage had to be ascribed to the medieval period.

However the explored early medieval sites are, quite surprisingly, found to be situated away from the main river Dwarakeswar. These sites are situated on the local lateritic outcrops centering around tanks or artificial means of water. In this regard, it is worthwhile

mentioning that we have an image of an arid *Rādha* tract in the Bhuvanesvara inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva, palaeographically datable to eleventh or twelfth century AD (Keilhorn 1981: 203-7). It is said in the inscription that the *Rādha* country was waterless (*ajalāsu*) and here in the boundary of a village near a forested tract Bhatta Bhavadeva excavated a reservoir of water or tank for the tired travelers. This inscription by an appropriate use of only one word '*ajalāsu*' describes the picture of this region. It is interesting to note that in the same inscription Bhavadeva is said to have constructed another tank in front of the temple of *Viṣṇu* for achieving *punya* or merit. Whatever might be the cause, these artificial tanks surely became a mode of survival in such arid tracts from early medieval period onwards. The present study area constitutes a part of *Rādha* and the most of the early medieval/medieval sites lies at a distance of about seven to eight km from the river on hard, impermeable lateritic outcrops. So the availability of natural water was quite restricted due to which artificial process of water management might have been devised for regular usage. It is essential to know whether the tanks in this area were constructed during the early medieval period or the medieval period after coming of the *Malla rajas*. For such interpretations, precise literary references and excavated data are desirable.

The region also played a crucial role in the framing of *Rādha* as a significant geo political unit of ancient Bengal. According to Chattopadhyay (Chattopadhyay 2010), the cultural traits of the Chotanagpur plateau along with adoption of cultural components from the main stream Ganga valley, coastal Bengal and Orissa provided a special impetus to form a unique cultural continuum in the region especially in the early medieval period. Keeping these factors in mind, two group of sites can be discussed. The first centres around the sites like Andra, Dayalpur (left bank of Dwarakeswar) lying closer to Sali, a tributary of the Damodar river. The second group centres around the sites Salda, Gokulnagar and Padumpur situated on the right bank of the Dwarakeswar river. In the sphere of iconoplasic art traditions, the present database recorded the abundance of Brahmanical and Jaina images datable between ninth to thirteenth centuries AD. Both the group of sites reflects individual style of sculptural art. As presumed from the epigraphic data of around sixth century AD, that after the downfall of the Guptas, there were some local independent rulers who established their dominance over a large part of the eastern and southern part of western Bengal. Of them, Gopachandra, Samacharadeva and Dharmaditya deserve special mention. The sixth century inscription found from the village Malla Sarul near Galsi of district Bardhaman deserves special mention which records land-grant of the adjoining villages. One of the important provinces ruled by these rulers was *Vardhamāna bhukti*. The sites Andra, Dayalpur located in the flood plains of Damodar and very close to Bardhaman district might have received an indirect influence from this process of development and reflects a kind of sculptural art which bears resemblances with the sites of the Ganga valley. On the other hand the sculptures revealed from the Salda area reveal stylistic affinities

with the Orissan style of Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Lohitagiri sculptures. The best examples in this regard might be cited from the Brahmanical sculptures of the Salda region, particularly the images of *Vārāhi* and *Cāmuṇḍā*. It is true that the military aggression of Orissan rulers and the subsequent penetration of Orissan Brahmins in this territory had a profound impact on its religious and socio-cultural ethos. From the historical point of view, it can be conjectured that the Salda area, lying on the south of Dihar and on the right bank of the river Dwarakeswar might have received an indirect influence from the adjacent areas of *Dandabhukti*. The early medieval prosperity of *Dandabhukti* in terms of polity and culture is unquestionable in the light of consistent discoveries of epigraphic and archaeological remains from time to time (Datta *et al.* 2008). The sites situated on the two opposite banks of the same river presents two different styles of sculptural art and associated archaeological record, which can actually be attributed to the geographical proximity of the respective areas to the adjacent geopolitical units.

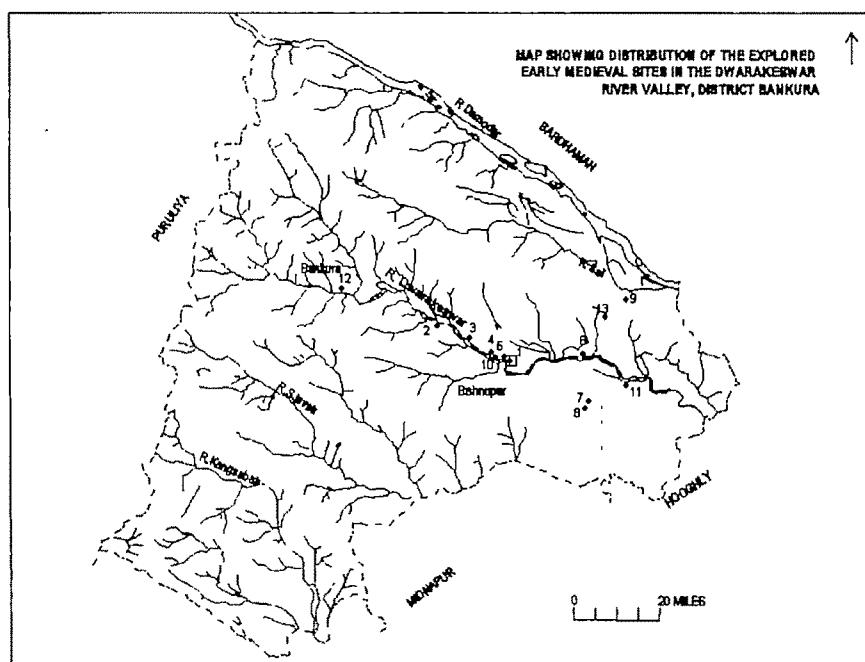
It is quite reasonable at this stage to consider that this area witnessed some incipient form of political control in the early medieval period that led gradually to the emergence of more sites and motivated the socio-cultural development of the area. The architectural ruins and the remarkable form of sculptural art allow us to consider the presence of semi-independent or independent principalities in this area. The ongoing invasions from the neighbouring areas might have led to the exchange of ideas and artefacts due to which we see diverse forms of iconoplasic art and architectural styles. Nevertheless, the presence of the tribal population in this area cannot be neglected, as a result of which, the local religious cults seem to be assimilated with the ongoing trends of cultural innovations. Proliferation of sites during the medieval period has to be understood in this backdrop and this long enduring process of development might have led to the emergence of bigger settlements like Bishnupur in the medieval period.

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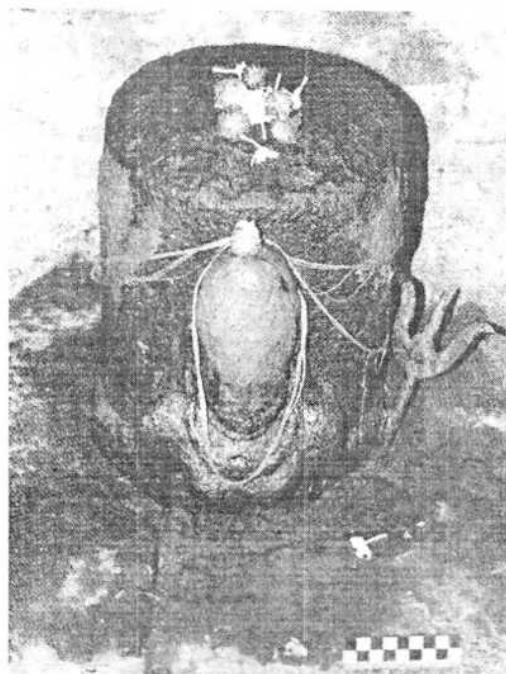




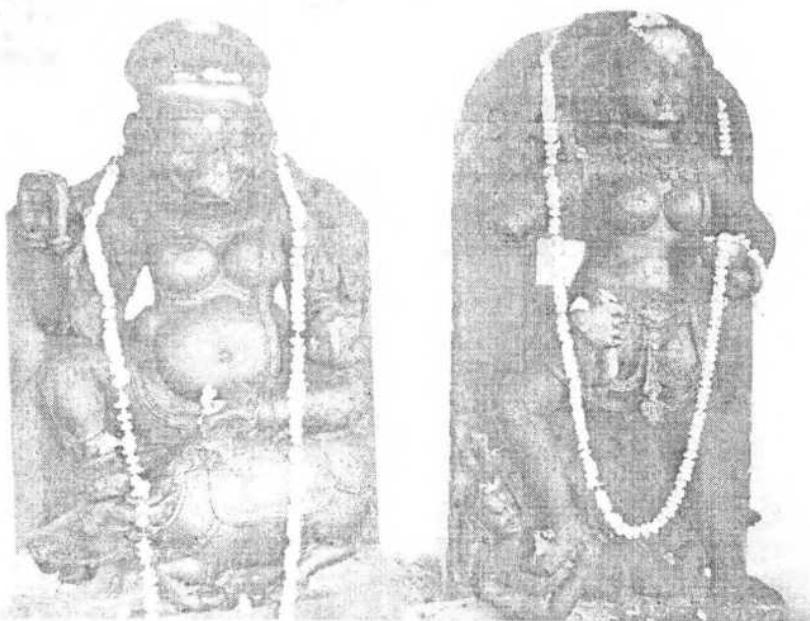
Pl I. *Mahiṣāsuramardinī* from Bahulara  
(Courtesy-Chattopadhyay)



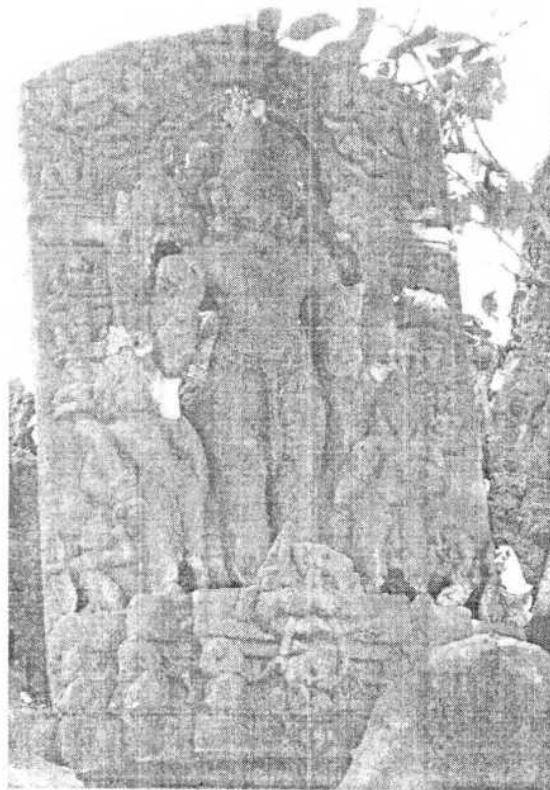
Pl II. *Viṣṇu* from Basubati  
(Courtesy-Chattopadhyay 2010)



Pl III. *Ekamukhalinga* from Bhatra



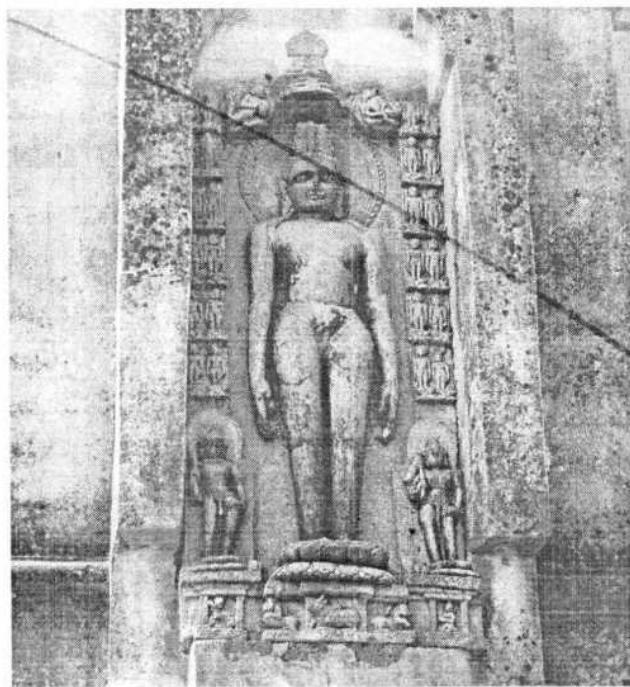
Pl IV. Sculptures from Salda



Pl V. *Sūrya* from Andra



Pl VI. *Viṣṇu* from Dharapat



Pl VII. Image of Jain *Tīrthāṅkara* plaqued on the wall



Pl VIII. *Manasā* from Naricha (Courtesy-Chattopadhyay 2010)



Pl IX. *Varāha* from Gokulnagar

## **Port Towns of Early Medieval Eastern India (600 A.D. – 1200 A.D.)**

### **KAKOLI TAH**

During early medieval period, the geographical contour of Eastern India can be envisaged from the ancient texts. In the Brahmanical system as described in the Puranas, the country was divided into five divisions namely *Madhyadésa*, *Uttarāpatha*, *Aparānta*, *Dakshinapatha* and *Prāchya*. The Eastern country or ‘*Prāchyadés*’, according to *Kāvyamīmāṃsa*, is located to the east of Banaras. The *Dharmaśāstras* place the eastern country to the east of Prayāg, while the commentary on the *Vātsyāyana Kāmasutra* indicates the location of the eastern country to the east of Anga (Law 1984: 14). In the official record of the Tang dynasty of China in the Seventh century A.D., India is described as consisting of five divisions: East, West, North, South and Central. The Chinese system of five divisions agrees with those mentioned in the Hindu Brahmanical system.

On following the Puranic system as well as the Chinese system, one may conclude the general and popular connotation of eastern India to comprise Bihar, Assam, Bengal proper including the whole of the Gangetic delta together with Sambalpur, Orissa and Gañjām (Law 1984: 14-15). In this context, it is needless to add that, as we are dealing with the eastern country during the early medieval period, our discussion will incorporate today’s Bangladesh as part of the eastern country mentioned above.

Our sources to depict port cities of eastern India have been mainly epigraphical, though Archaeology and Literature has contributed as well. Our literary works incorporate Dandin’s *Daśakumāracaṛita*, Bāṇabhatta’s *Harṣacarita*, Vākpati’s *Gauḍavāho*, Rājashekharā’s *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* and *Karpuramañjari*, Kṣemendra’s *Abhidhānaçintamāni*, Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritsāgar*, Bilhana’s *Vikramānikadevacarita* and Kalhan’s *Rājatarangini*. All these works are Sanskrit texts written during the period 600 A.D. – 1200 A.D.. The travel accounts of Huien Tsang and Itsing, the Arab and Persian account of 9th and 10th century on eastern India trade scenario have served a meaningful purpose for us. Other significant sources, include *Tabaqāt-i-Nasiri* by Minhaj-ud-din, *Rihālā* by Ibn Battuta, *Chu-fan-chi* by Chau-ju-kua (an officer supervising foreign trade under the Sung dynasty, A.D. 1225) and also the account left by the celebrated Venetian traveller Marco Polo (late thirteenth century). The *Yuktikalpataru* attributed to Bhoja Narapati and the Jagannath temple chronicle (*Madala Panji*) have also served our purpose to some extent. Both these texts highlight the maritime history of Kaliṅga. Some information have also been accumulated from *Pavandūta* of Dhoyi and *Karatoyā māhātmya* by an anonymous author.

In view of discussing the importance of port cities of eastern India, we need to briefly discuss the salient features of external trade and traders of subcontinent in the early medieval period. The question of decline of trade has been seriously criticized by several historians

in recent times. A part of the hypothesis of Indian Feudalism in early medieval times as put forward by R. S. Sharma (Sharma 1980: 102-5) refers to a decline by cities, urban crafts, trade and money.

Our studies have revealed that Arabs played a dominant role in the Indian ocean trade from 7th century onwards. They swiftly expanded their political dominion over northern Africa, Mediterranean region, Central Asia and Sindh. Their territorial conquests over Egypt, Persia and Sindh gave them strategic control over Indian ocean trade. The political success of Arabs helped in the spread of Islam on one hand and for the expansion of international trade on the other hand. The establishment of Ummayid and later, the Abbasid caliphates made it possible for Arab traders to play a lead role in the trade network that operated along the overland as well as the maritime routes which connected Europe with East Asia (Singh 2008: 585).

Literary evidences of long maritime journeys made by Arab traders can be found in 9th century texts, such as *Ahbar as Sin-wal-Hind*. The text records journeys of Arab traders from ports in Oman to Quilon (Kollam) in Kerala and on to China, via the port of *Kalah-bar* (probably located north of Singapore) and the Malacca straits. K. N. Chaudhuri (Chaudhuri 1985: 17-34) has focused on the fact that the Indian ocean was divided into smaller segments by the 11th century—one of them being the stretch from the Red sea and Persian Gulf to Gujarat and Malabar; the second one was from the Indian coast to the Indonesian Archipelago and the third one from south east Asia to East Asia. At the junction of these three segments, a great trade emporia emerged to provide merchants with cargo, shipping services and protection. Trade emporia included Aden, Hormuz, Cambay, Calicut, Satgaon, Malacca, Guangzhou and Quanzhou. Silk, porcelain, Sandalwood and black pepper were important commodities in the Asian trade of medieval times. These items were exchanged for various commodities such as incense, horses, ivory, cotton textiles and metal products. India maintained maritime contacts with China and East Asia

India's trade relations with South East Asia and China aggravated in the early medieval period. According to Tansen Sen (Sen 2003: 236-7), a major change occurred in the nature of Buddhist dominated Sino-Indian interaction to get into a new look of trade centered exchanges within the period from 7th to 15th century. As by this time, China merged as a major centre of Buddhism, therefore there was a reduction in the importance of cultural transmission from India to China. He has divided Sino-Indian trade links in early medieval India into three phases. The first phase belonged to 7th-9th centuries where it is seen that the earlier demand for Buddhist rituals continued. The second phase (9th-10th centuries) saw a decline in overland trade between India and China because of a politically unstable state in Myanmar and Central Asia. The third phase began in the late 10th century when both tributary and commercial relations revived. This revival gave spurt to overland and maritime trade. Apart from silk and porcelain, other Chinese imports included hides,

vermilion, fruits (such as pears and peaches), camphor, lacquer and mercury. Metals such as gold, silver and copper also finds mention as import items from China. Keeping at par with imports, India exported a wide range of items such as horse, frankincense, sandalwood, gharu wood, sapan wood, spices, sulphur, ivory, cinnabar, rose water, rhinoceros horn and putchuk (Liu 1996: 49-72).

Side by side, the expansion of trade between India and China was accompanied by the re-orientation of trade routes. From 8th century onwards, trade was carried on mainly through maritime routes rather than overland routes. One of such routes went through the Andaman and Nicobar islands, while another one passed by the Bay of Bengal ports on to Sumatra and the South China Sea. Sea routes were being preferred due to maritime technology, especially from sewn ships to sturdier ones with nailed hulls (Singh 2008: 587). The early medieval period saw a shift away of import commodities from luxury items to basic goods such as staples, yarn, textiles, dyes, processed iron, pepper and horse. On the basis of the list of commodities mentioned in inscriptions of the Ayyahole guild, Meera Abraham (Singh 2008: 587) has arrived at the above conclusion. She points out that the inscriptions from the mid 12th century records the import of large quantity of goods into South India from West Asia, South East Asia and China. The items of import were precious stones, pearls, perfumes, aromatics, myrobalans, honey, wax, textiles (silk), spices, horses and elephants. Export items included cotton textiles; spices (e.g. pepper), iron, dyes, ivory, areca nuts and putchuk.

### **State of Commerce in Eastern India in the early Medieval Period :**

John. S. Deyell (Deyell 1990: 4-7) has forcefully argued against the theory of monetary scarcity in early medieval India. According to him, there was a reduction of coin types and a decline in the aesthetic quality of coins, but not in the volume of coins in circulation. Deyell's work focused on the post 1000 A.D. period, but the roots of that period lay in the preceding centuries. According to him, the debasement of coinage was not necessarily a signal of financial crisis of the state or of a general economic crisis. This debasement may be due to an increasing demand for coins in a situation where the supply of precious metals was restricted. Shortage of silver occurred in different parts of the world, from time to time for a variety of reasons. Afghanistan was a major supplier of silver to the Indian sub-continent. Deyell argues that as north India experienced a sustained shortage of silver in 1000 A.D. (and in some places as early as 750 A.D.), this forced the rulers to dilute the silver content of their coins.

The volume of external trade as discussed in the preceding sections could not have been transacted by means of barter system only. There must have been a convenient mode of exchange. Sulaiman, the Arab merchant clearly stated in his account that in about the middle of the 9th century A.D., trade in the kingdom of Ruhmī (i.e. Pāla empire) was

carried on by means of Kauris (Elliot and Dowson 1964: 5). The cowries discovered in a hoard in the ruins of a monument of the Pāla period excavated at Paharpur and also at the Pāla site at Colgong (Bhagalpur region) bear clear archaeological testimonies to the fact that cowries were the medium of exchange in the Pāla period (Dikshit 1938: 33-4; Sharma 1980: 106). The records of the Pāla period also refer to coin names, e.g. the Bodhgayā stone inscription of Dharmapāla (regnal year 26) where the excavation of a tank at the cost of three thousand dramas is referred [Maitreya 1319(B.S.): 29]. Utpala's commentary (10th century A.D.) on Varāhamihir's *Brihatsamhitā* (Sastri and Bhat 1974: 12-3) has supplied us some figures which help us to presume that in Varāhamihir's time one purāṇa was equal to 1280 cowries (Mukherjee 1982: 71). From the testimonies of Ibn Khurdādbāh and Sulaiman we observe that in Ruhmī, there was plenty of gold available (Mukherjee 1982: 71). Silver coinage existed in the Harikela region, the area including the Chittagong as well as the Noakhali and Comilla district, Sylhet adding the list a little later (Mukherjee 1982: 71). The coinage of Harikela was inspired by the coinage of Arakan (Mukherjee 1982: 71). Rulers such as Devavarman and Vasuvarmā, Śrīkumāra Jivadhāraṇarāṭa and Śrīdhāranarāṭa (of the Pāla dynasty), Deva Khadga, Rājabhaṭa and Balabhaṭa (of the Khadga dynasty), and Prithuvīra or Prithubālā or Prithutalā (Mukherjee 1982: 71) struck coins in the second half of the seventh century. In Assam cowries, coins as well as barter system were in vogue as mode of exchange in the period concerned. The Tezpur area in Assam has exposed a number of silver coins, minted in the names of Harjharavarman and Vanamala (Chaudhury 1988: 275). Cowry currency was prevalent in Orissa during this period as Hiuen Tsang observed that people used cowry (Beal 1906: 207) and pearls as medium of transaction while travelling through Kongoda (Puri- Gañjam region) in 7th century A.D. The inscription of Orissa of the period under review have referred to certain coin names which suggest the prevalence of metallic currency. They include *aripiṇḍaka churnika pada*, *purāṇa*, *nishka*, *dināra*, *rūpya*, *sobhana rūpya*, *ruake*, *tankā*, *śasukani tankā*, etc. (Tripathi 2000: 80). In Bihar, there were paucity of coins as excavation reports reveal (Kumar 2001: 18). Another portable form of money having high intrinsic value was churṇī. In the Madanapāḍā inscription of Viśvarūpasena (first half of the 13th century AD), a plot of land yielding an annual income of 'hundred Churṇas together with thirty two purṇās—132', and of another piece of land yielded an 'annual' income of 'six hundred churṇīs together with twenty seven purāṇas (Majumdar 1929: 11, 44-5, 137). The Alagum inscription of Anantavarman Chodagaṅgā (C. A.D. 1141) records a deposit expressed in words as *pañcha-purāṇ-adhika*, *churṇī-sat-aika* and in figures as pu i.e. purāṇa (Mukherjee 1982: 45) Chūrṇī and purāṇa were same as Kārshāpaṇa, equal in value to 1280 cowrie shells (Mukherjee 1982: 44). The term Chūrṇī means made or mixed up with anything powdered or pounded. The term in that case, should have primarily meant 'dust money' in the context of denoting a unit of currency (Mukherjee 1982: 70).

The period under review also witnessed gold being a medium of exchange in our zone. The account of Ibn Khurdadhbah, the *Tabaqāt-i-Nasiri* as well as a Tibetan account furnishes information relating to the same fact (Mukherjee 1982: 70). The Tibetan account narrates that one Nag-shao was sent in the second quarter of the 11th century A.D. to Vikramasila monastery to request for Atisa's visit to Tibet. For that purpose he was given 'seven ounces of gold' for personal expenses and also some additional quantities of that metal for various other purpose (Das 1965: 60). Putting the 'gold dust in a small bag, he presented it to Atisa' (Das 1965: 65). The same account alludes to the use of cowries in the monastery and at Bodhgaya (Das 1965: 66). An inscription from Silimpur (Bogra district) refers to 'nine hundred hemas', for the purpose of a grant to a brahmana by king Jayapāladeva of Kāmarūpa (Mukherjee 1982: 71). Each hema (gold) denoted a piece of (gold) metal (Mukherjee 1982: 71) weighing 80 ratis, which was the standard weight of suvarna coins (Kangle 1966 72: 19). The table furnished in the *Lilāvatī* (Mukherjee 1982: 71) presumes 16 silver units (dramma, purana or churni) to one unit of gold (called *Suvarna, hemā, nishka, purāṇa* or *Chūrṇī*) weighing about 80 ratis. A unit of gold was equal to 20480 cowries.

### **Port towns in Eastern India (c. 6th – c. 12th Century A.D.) : A Profile**

Though it seems that the early medieval maritime trade was dominated by the ports of Gujarat and south India, the ports of Bay of Bengal were not far behind. Tāmralipti was a port per excellence in Bengal till the 8th century A.D. Samandar was another port of prominence in Bengal (located near modern Chittagong) which flourished in the post 8th century A.D. This port finds frequent mention in the Arab accounts. Ports of the like of Che-li-ta-lo, Palur and Mānikpatnā dominated the trade scenario of coastal Orissa in the said period. Both literary and archaeological sources have corroborated to this fact. In the following, we make an effort to give a comprehensive account of the port towns in eastern India during 6th to 12th century A.D..

#### **Tāmralipti**

Generally equated with 'Tamluk (in the Midnaore district), Tāmralipti is situated on the right bank of the Rūpnārāyan river. According to P. C. Dasgupta, other than Pliny and Ptolemy (Mukherjee 1982: 71), Tāmralipta finds textual reference in no less than fifteen ancient texts (Dasgupta 1953: 31-4). The port finds mention in the *Mahābhārata* (Dasgupta 1953: 31-4). Tāmralipta is called a *pāṭṭāṇa* which signifies a city with a royal seat on the confluence of some rivers (Dasgupta 1953: 31-4), *purāṇa* and Buddhist texts. This port was used by Chinese pilgrim to undertake enterprises for the land of Sribhoja (this land denotes the north eastern side of the Sumatra from the southern shore of Malacca to the city of Palembang (Takakusu 1982: 185). In the *Bṛihat Saṁhitā* of Varāhamihir, Tāmralipta is referred to as a city (Sastri and Bhat 1974: 14). In the *Daśakumāracarita* of Dandin, Tāmralipta or Dāmalipta is depicted as a thriving centre of trade and commerce (Ryder

1927: 287). Different synonyms for Tāmralipta is referred to by Hemchandra as Dāmalipta, Tāmralipta, Tamālinī and Viṣṇugriha. The Kathāsaritsāgar mentions Tāmralipta as situated near the eastern sea. The *Brahmānda Purāṇa* incorporates a chapter called Tāmralipta māhātmya where the temple of Vargabhīma of the town is mentioned. According to N. L. Dey, the temple was constructed on an ancient Vihāra, which may be one of the few mentioned by Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century A.D. (Dey 1971: 116).

It is for its location at the confluence of the sea and the Rūpnārāyana river that this port was called a ayana Dronimukha. Being the most important port of Kaliṅga, Tāmralipta was situated at the apex of the east coast of India and served as the main gateway for ancient Kaliṅga sea going traders, travellers and missionaries (Devi 1992: 50-2). The ironical fact is that Tāmralipti is recognized as a part of Bengal for its present geographical existence, though it was under the control of the Kaliṅga kings for many centuries (Tripati 2000: 30). The sea ports of Kaliṅga, namely Tāmralipti, Palur and Pithuṇḍa were interconnected by road within the hinterland of Orissa (Das 1978: 40). From Ptolemy and Hiuen Tsang, we come to know that the sailors and merchants boarding at Tāmralipti could sail in the Ganges upto Champā, Pātaliputra and Vāraṇasī (Tripati and Rao 1994: 33-9). From this port vessels regularly sailed to Burma or crossed the Bay of Bengal to make a direct voyage to Malaya Peninsula and to the East India and Indo-China, or may be beyond that region (Banerji 1930: 94). That Tāmralipti was a premiere port of India in the pre-Christian area can be learnt from the Vinaya piṭaka (Rhys Davids 1881-85: 338) and Mahāvarīśa (Geiger 1912: 20-3, 5-6, 38-9). The Vinaya piṭaka states that Tāmralipti had maritime relations with Ceylon: Emperor Aśoka himself travelled up to Tāmralipti to see off his daughter Sanghamitrā to Ceylon who was carrying a branch of Bodhi tree for the Emperor of Ceylon by ship. The Mahāvarīśa further informs that the journey form Tāmralipti to Ceylon covered seven days only. The Chinese traveller Fa-hien, who visited India in the 5th century A.D. has described Tāmralipti as a strong maritime settlement of the Buddhist and himself left for China via Ceylon from Tāmralipti. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who came to northern India during the reign of Harsha Vardhana (A.D. 606-647) visited the Tāmralipti port and learnt from here for the first time about Ceylon and the perils of southern voyage. I-tsing arrived at Tāmralipti in A.D. 673 (Mishra 1981: 77-87). He learnt Sanskrit, Philosophy and Śabda Vidyā in Varaha monastery which was resided over by both monks and nuns, living in perfect discipline of life and conduct (Behera 1977: 115-21). The disembarkation of I-tsing at this port from the Malay peninsula proves its international linkages. Tāmralipti was also a famous port for exporting copper ores to foreign countries (Tripati 2000: 31). Tāmralipti, though being a prosperous commercial centre not bereft of thieves and robbers, about whom I-tsing has recorded in his itinerary. He was attacked by road robbers while traveling from Nālānda to Tāmralipti and he narrowly escaped from them (Ray 1994: 295-6). According to Nihar Ranjan Ray, Tāmralipti was located on the banks

of one of the tributaries of either the Gaṅgā or the Saraswati. The city lost its importance as a centre of trade and commerce most probably because the tributary changed its course (Ray 1994: 295-6). Excavations carried out at Tamluk in 1954-55 has revealed four periods of occupation from the Neolithic to modern times. The second period is the Maurya Śunga phase, the third one corresponds to first second centuries A.D. and period IV, the Kuṣāṇa Gupta period is marked by terracotta figurines, urban scenes depicted on terracotta plaques, coins and semi-precious beads (Dasgupta 1953: 31-4). Data furnished by literature highlights Tāmralipta as prosperous trade centre which is not matched by existing excavated materials. Though surface finds from Tamluk and neighbouring areas (within the present Tamluk sub-division), which are now in the collection of Tamluk museum and private owners and agencies, are quite impressive, the provenance of these objects are not always correctly recorded (Chakravarti 2002: 131). Parts of the ancient city is buried under the river silt. The imperial gazetteer of India (Singbhumi-Trashi-ched-zong) 1908, records the finding of a considerable number of silver and copper coins bearing Buddhist symbols from the crumbling bank of river Rūpnārāyana (Tripati 2000: 32).

### **Devaparvata**

Chinese sources suggest that around seventh century A.D., Samatata area was emerging as a point of contact for coastal as well as long distance voyage in the Bay of Bengal. A few names that survive among ancient harbours of Samataṭa is Devaparvata which is identified with Maināmatī Lalmai in Comilla district of Bangladesh. The earliest epigraphic evidence of Devaparvata is provided by the Kailan C. P. of Śrīdhāraṇarāṭa (c. A.D. 665-75) (Sircar 1983: 36-40). Ranabir Chakravarti has discussed this in detail. (Chakravarti, 2002: 151)

In the aforementioned inscription, Devaparvata finds mention as being encircled by the river Kṣirodā (modern Khirnai), both banks of which were decorated by boats and elephant took bath in the same. Devaparvata is ornamented with the epithet Sarvatobhadra, which means that it was approachable from all four sides or had gates on all four sides. That Devaparvata was a riverine port in Samaṭata can be unmistakably proved by the following line in the inscription which reads thus:—"atha mattamātaṅgaśataśukhavigāhyāñāno-vividha tirthaya naubhirāparimitābhīrūpara cita Kulāya parikṣitad-abhimatanimna gāminyā Kṣirodayā Sarvvatobhadrakad Devaparvata".

The inscription in question mentions three *naudandakas* (boat parking stations) around Deyaparvata. We are also informed that there was a *villabharīga* (eg. The Bengali word bil, moss covered with water) associated with a *niṣkrāntaka pravīṣṭaka* (facilities for entry and exit of vessels) (Sircar 1965: 363-77, 340). (Chakravarti, 2002: 151)

Apart from the Kailan copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇarāṭa (c.A.D. 668-75), Devaparvata figures once again in the Asiatic Society copper plate of Bhavadeva Abhinava Mrigāṅka (c. A.D. 765-80). He was a ruler belonging to the Deva dynasty of Samatata (Sircar 1983:

744-50). This record too mention Devaparvata's association with the river Kṣirodā. In this inscription of eighth century A.D., Devaparvata is found to be described more elaborately, though in a stereotyped manner. In this inscriptions, the city is stated to be a Jayaskandhāvār.

The former C.P. referred to the city only as a riverine port, while in the second one, we find the description of the city to be more elaborate, and the city is enhanced to the status of a Jayaskandhāvār along with a riverine port. The Devas appreciated the significance of the port in their inscription. The Paśchimbhag copper plate grant of Śrīcandra (c. A.D. 925-75) dated in his fifth regnal year (i.e. c. A.D. 930), furnishes the last known epigraphic evidence of Devaparvata. This inscription also states the location of Devaparvata on the banks of Kṣirodā, the river on which many boats plied. This record also mentions that Lālambivana was the habitat of hundreds of boatmen. The importance of Devaparvata as a river port and the navigability of the Kṣirodā can be well understood from this inscription. But the noticeable point is that the inscription in question was not issued by Śrīcandra from Devaparvata but from Vikrampur Jayaskandhāvāra. Devaparvata is referred to in the context of Trailokyachandra's (father of Śrīcandra) conquest of Samatāta country and his control over the riverine port.

The above discussed survey brings forth the indication that Devaparvata was the most important riverine port in Samatāta country from the second half of the seventh to the first quarter of the tenth century. The Rātas, Devas and early Candra rulers utilized the Samatata-Harikela region as their primary power base during this period. The Candra political power saw remarkable expansion and growth after the accession of Śrīcandra Candra to the throne in c. A.D. 925. Within a period of issuance of Paśchimbag copper plate, Sricandra's hold spanned over wide areas including Kāmarūpa, Srihatta and Vāṅga (Sircar 1973: 19-40, 63-9) apart from his control over Samatata Harikela region. The aforementioned inscription has brought to light one fact that the Candras changed their seat of power from Samatata to the very heart of Vāṅga, sometimes around 930 A.D.. This became necessary most probably to ensure a better administration for the expansive Candra domain (Chakravarti 2002: 152).

About 20 mounds are recorded in the Maināmati Lalmai hill area by A. K. M. Shamsul Alam (1982) in his monograph on Maināmati, but Rashid (1968) has mentioned the existence of more than 50 sites in the area.

In 1803, a copper plate inscription of Rañavankamalla Harikāladeva (1220 A.D.) was discovered on the Mainamati ridge during a road repair work (Comilla-Kalirbazar road). In the year 1917 N. K. Bhattachari explored the structural remains and antiquities in the area. During the second world war, the ruins were re-discovered and thereby the Archaeological survey of India came forward to restore and protect some of the sites. Some of the sites were greatly disturbed by the brick robbing activities of the military contractors. The Pakistan Department of Archaeology began in 1955. It was at Salban Vihara that the initial emphasis was given and when unearthed, a large monastic complex was discovered. Then

work was continued at Kulila Mura and Charpatra Mura. The other sites which met with excavatin since liberation (1971) are Ananda Vihar., Rupban Mura and Ita Khola Mura (Chakravarti 2002: 152).

### Mānikpatna

The Orissan institute of Maritime and Southeast Asian studies, Bhuvaneswar, carried out trial excavations in 1989-1993 and exposed remains of early historical period such as Indian Roulette ware, fragments of amphora, red-glazed ware, Puri-Kushana coins and a Kharosthī inscription on a potsherd. The upper levels exhibited huge quantity Chinese celadon ware made of jade green celadon. Other finds include a damaged Chinese copper coin with a square perforation in the centre. All these findings are indications of Mānikpatna being a flourishing port and trade centre of ancient Kalinga and that it had close trade contact with distant lands such as Arabia, Rome, Ceylon and China (Pradhan 1991: 8-10). Mānikpatna enrolled itself in the maritime History of Orissa from 1st century B.C. to 18th century A.D. as can be deduced from literary sources (Tripati 2000: 36) and numismatic sources. Shasamalla's coins have been discovered from Mānikpatna in Orissa, Polonaruwa in Sri Lanka and Kotchina in Indonesia thereby focusing on the ancient maritime network linking coastal Orissa, Sri Lanka and Samatata and obviously excavation reports.

Mānikpatna is situated in Brahmagiri taluk of Puri district on the mouth of Satapada ghat of Chilka lake. It was in 1993 that the Marine Archaeology centre of National Institute of Oceanography, Goa and Department of History of Berhampur University took a joint venture and carried out joint explorations on the shore of Chilka at Mānikpatna. Terracotta ring wells were noticed as well as huge quantities of Chinese ceramics were encountered at the site; mounds near the site have yielded early historial pottery.

### Che-li-ta-lo

*Che-li-ta-lo* or Charitrapura was another important sea port of ancient Kalinga on the east coast of India. We can collect information about this ancient port city from the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's account *Si-yu-ki*, where he mentions, near the shore of the ocean in the south east was the city *Che-li-ta-lo* about 20 li in circuit (6 to 7 km),which was a thorough fare and resting place for sea going traders and strangers from distant lands in the Wu-tu country meaning Orissa (Watters 1973: 190-4). This city was a great mart for rare commodities, a great centre of culture, a famous emporium of overseas trade and also a great centre of Buddhism in Orissa during 7th century A.D. *Che-li-ta-lo*, a major port of 7th century A.D. is tentatively identified with Chhatragada (Behera 1977: 1-5) situated in the vicinity of Chilka lake Charitrapura was also a centre of Buddhism apart from being a port. The above identification of Charitrapura is under dispute. Waddel has identified this place with Nendra, on the bank of Chitrotpala, a tributary of the river Mahānādī in the district

of Cuttack (Ganguli 1975: 75). An old fort exists at the place thereby suggesting the place to be an ancient one. Chitrotpala is a tributary of the river Mahānadi in the district of Cuttack. The Oriya author Saralā Das of the book Sarala Mahabharata has identified *Che-li-ta-lo* with Chandrabhaga near Konark (Sahu 1964: 142). General A. Cunningham equated *Che-li-ta-lo* with Charitrapura and identified it with modern Puri (Cunningham 1963: 430). Its identification with Puri made by Cunningham is tenable as Fang-Chih renders *Che-li-ta-lo* as Chiao-Fang-che which probably means ‘having religious observance’. From this information we can deduce that Puri was recognized as a holy place in the 7th century A.D. (Tripati 2000: 35).

Rhys Davis (Ganguly 1975: 68) agrees with the view of Cunningham about the identification of *Che-li-ta-lo* with Charitrapura but is in a state of confusion to accept Puri as ancient Charitrapura. However historians hold *Che-li-ta-lo* and Jagannath Puri to be the same and in order to defend Cunningham’s view, it has been counter argued that the Chinese pilgrim might have confirmed his travel accounts to centres of Buddhism only, thus deliberately excluding reference to the place coming under a different religion (Tripati 2000: 35). Therefore it may be probable that Jagannath Puri was a famous centre of Buddhism as well as Hinduism. And at the same time Jagannath Puri, being a confluence of faith had at all times welcomed to its fold the different streams of religious movement occurring all over the country. Therefore it has almost been unanimously agreed by scholars that *Che-li-ta-lo* of Hiuen Tsang and Puri are identical (Choudhary 1977: 65-76). Another point to moot is that Chodagāṅgā Deva is believed to have built the Jagannath temple of Puri in the 12th century A.D. Therefore it might be the reason behind the inability of the Chinese pilgrim to refer to Jagannath in his account (Tripati 2000: 35).

### Pālur

An ancient sea port of Orissa identified with the place on the mouth of the river Rishikūlya. It finds mention in the ancient and medieval historical literature as a place associated with sea borne trade and commerce in Orissa. Historians unanimously agree over the fact that the Kalingans were pioneers of Indian colonization in the Indian Archipelago (Banerji 1930-31: 108). The ancient Kaliṅgans braved the seas from the ports of Tāmralipti, Palur, *Che-li-ta-lo* and Kaliṅganagara and enjoyed commercial relations with the Malaysian countries (Mahtab 1959-60: 103). Of all these ports, Pālur was the most active one as far as contact with Malaysia was concerned. Pālur had been a prosperous port since the days of Ptolemy till the advent of the Portuguese in India in the fifteenth century. Pālur had been identified by some scholars as the capital of Kongoda on the basis of Hiuen Tsang’s report (Mahtab 1959-60: 104). This port finds reference in Ptolemy’s Geographic where he has mentioned it as an important port of the Kaliṅga country and an apheterion (point of departure) for ships bound for Khryse. The ‘golden land’ or Suvarṇabhūmi laid immediately to the south of Paloura (Geřini 1974: 835). Khryse denotes south east Asian countries such as Sumātrā,

Java, Pegu, Burma and some ports of Malaya Peninsula and Indonesia (Mukherjee 1981: 8-9). Paloura of Ptolemy is identified with modern Pālur in Gañjām district of Orissa and was located at the southern tip of Chilka lake. Pālur acted as the only port of departure, to the east on the coromandel coast (Majumdar 1986: 175). Kaliṅga played an important role in the trans Asian maritime trade during the early centuries of the Christian era. Even large vessels did not sail directly from Sri Lanka to south east Asia, instead they sailed up to Palur and from here they proceeded to the golden land or Suvarṇabhūmi.

Sylvain Levi as well as K.S. Behera has opined that Dantapur, the ancient capital of Kalinga and Pālur are identical. Sylvain Levi reached such a conclusion after going through many ancient texts such as the Buddhist Jātakas, Pali texts and the Ceylonese chronicles (Choudhari 1977: 65-76). K.S. Behera has equated Dantapur with Palur because Pallur (Telugu word) means ‘Danta’ (tooth) and ‘Ur’ is identified with ‘Pura’ (city) (Behera 1977: 115-21).

Archaeological explorations conducted by Archaeological survey of India in 1984-85 at Pālur and adjacent areas have yielded Red ware bowls with flaring rim and having ledge on the exterior and a fragmentary terracotta dabber in an area of half square kilometer in sand dunes. On the basis of a comparative study, the pottery was dated to 12th – 14th century A.D. The recent excavations carried out by the Orissan Institute of Maritime and South East Asian studies, Bhubaneshwar, further confirms the fact that Palur port existed since the Mauryan period. Some early medieval temples do exist at Palur though they are buried up to the plinth due to a siltation which is a continuing process due to the south west monsoon and wind. A huge number of pottery of early and medieval times were encountered while digging the foundation of a house at Pālur (Tripati 2000: 39).

### Savar

This place, situated about 15 miles north-west of Dhaka on the Dhaka Aricha road, was important in the early period exclusively for its river trade. The old section of modern Savar located on the banks of river Bangshi is linked with the large waterways of Bangladesh, and still is commercially important as it draws a respectable number of traffic. The old river bank, bazaar deals mostly in timber, rice, pulses, etc and a preliminary investigation suggests that in earlier times, this place was commercially linked with far off places such as Barishal, Sylhet and Rajshahi. That Savar was a place of riverine importance can be reflected in its wealth of archaeological remains. The Madanpur copper plate charter of Śrīcandra (the most important ruler of the Candra dynasty is known to have a long reign of nearly half of a century) issued in the 44th to 46th year of his reign has recorded the gift of a plot of land by him to a Brahman named Śukradeva (Basak 1949: 57-8; Sircar 1965: 337-9). This grant was issued from the victorious camp at Vikrampur. The location of the donated plot provides some interesting clues about the settlement. Śukradeva was

donated land at a place called *Vāngasāgar Sambhāṇḍāriyaka* in Yolāmaṇḍala (a maṇḍala is an administrative unit smaller than bhukti or province) included within Puṇḍravardhana bhukti (Basak 1949: 57). Yolāmaṇḍala finds mention also in the Dhulla copper plate of Śrīcandra (Majumdar 1986: 165-6). According to N.K. Bhattacharji, Yolāmaṇḍala led to the north of the river Dhaleswari in the Manikganj sub-division of the Dhaka district (Basak 1949: 55). In recent times, ancient Yolāmaṇḍala is identified with modern Sabhar, about 24 km to the north west of Dhaka. This site has yielded many significant Archaeological objects, which included the present copper plate also (Chakravarti 2002: 144).

The ancient occupation of Savar can be proved by the still surviving Kotbari mound, which is a large rectangular area (720' × 550') surrounded by a mud wall, which is largely eroded now but stood, even in 1925, upto 25' high in places. Now only potsherds characterized it as an ancient occupational area (Chakravarti 2002: 139).

There is another ancient occupational area located close to the modern channel of the river, about a mile to the north along the river and known as Mathbari. While clearing, this land revealed ancient bricks and potsherd. About a mile to the east of the occupational area is situated the Buddhist monastic remains of Savar. The physiography of the Savar country side is somewhat undulating and covered by reddish clay belonging to the Madhupur Pleistocene uplands. There are numerous sal trees and jackfruit trees around. Therefore it can be assumed that this area to the south of Madhupur tract was once deeply forested and ancient. Buddhist monks decided to set up an establishment in this forest, which was close to a big river side market and port. The second Buddhist establishment at Savar, known as Harish Chandra Rajar Bari, is located in Majidpur village, about 2 furlongs to the east of the Savar bus stand market. The present height of the mound is about 18'-19', and measures 160' by 130'. The Rajasan mound to the east of Harish Chandra Rajar Bari, was explored by some local antiquarians in 1913, leading to the discovery of a large number of terracotta plaques containing the images of Buddha. In 1925-26, the Archaeological Survey of India unearthed traces of four structures in the area, along with some lintels made of terracotta. An inscribed Viṣṇu image along with a number of votive reliefs with images of Buddha were found. The evidence can be dated to seventh-eighth century A.D. N.K. Bhattacharji opines that there was a Buddhist monastery at Rajasan.

Another mound which has revealed a 126'6" square stupa complex is the Rajbari mound. Excavation has also revealed a silver 'Harikela' coin, a gold coin and a number of Buddhist bronze figures. This mound can also be dated to seventh eighth century A.D. on the basis of archaeological finds (Chakravarti 2002: 141).

The ruins from Savar have unearthed six post Gupta coins. Two of the coins bear the legend Śrī Krama and a third coin figures the legend Sudhanya. These coins does not help much to reconstruct the political history of Savar, rather two inscription reported from this place are much more useful for the purpose. The first one found incised on a burnt brick

fragment contains the name of a king called Harish Chandra Pal. The second inscription was found by Bhattachari in a Hindu temple and was issued by a king Mahendra who listed his genealogy here. The genealogy provide the information that Dhīmantasena, a son of the king Bhīmsena was worshipper of the Buddha, and after a quarrel with his brother, he went to a place known as Bhavalina where he established a kingdom upto the Himalayas and set up his capital at Sambhar or modern Sabhar. Ranadhirse's son was Harish Chandra Sen who was a saintly king and spent most of his life in Buddhist monasteries. His son Mahendra founded a temple. It may be that during the troubled phase of the Pāla kingdom, one of the member chose the secluded and forested area of Savar to set up a new kingdom.

Now it is necessary to analyze the connotation of *Vaṅgasāgar Sambhāṇḍāriyaka*. According to Ranabir Chakravarti, the term *Sambhāṇḍāriyaka* may stand for a place where items could be appropriately stored. The stored items may logically be associated with commercial activities at a given centre of exchange. This type of exchange centres could also have offered warehousing facilities (*Sambhāṇḍāra*). The *Sambhāṇḍāriyaka*, being a non-rural centre of commerce may correspond to *Puṭabhedana*, which literally means a place where lids (of merchandise) were broken (by merchant for sale). Therefore we find that a *Puṭabhedana* and a *Sambhāṇḍāriyaka* performed similar functions as a particular type of trade centre which offered facilities of warehousing of commodities (Chakravarti 2002: 145). The other component of the term *Vaṅgasāgar* denotes the sea of *Vaṅga*. Ancient *Vaṅga* covered the central part of deltaic Bengal (i.e. Dhaka-Vikrampur-Faridpur) along with occasional inclusion of coastal areas variously known as *Vaṅgāla* and *Anuttaravaṅga* (Bhattacharya 1977: 56).

### **Samandar**

In the Arabic accounts, a port named Samandar finds mention in the country 'Dhm' (it is pronounced as Dhaum and probably refers to the kingdom of the famous Pāla king Dharmapāla). The name Samandar appears to be named after Samudra or Sea, which implies its location being on or near the coastal regions in Bengal (Chakravarti 2002: 165). Al-Idrisi (Chakravarti 2002: 166) on the basis of the accounts of Ibn Khurdadbeh (c. A.D. 882) has informed us that an island lying close to Samandar was visited by various types of merchants. The island of Ibn Khurdādbah's accounts has been identified with Sandwip island and the port Samandar with its location near the Sandwip island, may logically be identified with a port in or near modern Chittagong. Both Ibn Khurdadbeh and Al Idrisi are highly in praise of Samandar, the situation of the same according to Al Idrisi being on a Khawar or creek like formation (Chakravarti 2002: 166). The situation of Samandar on a Khawar made it conducive for ingress and egress of vessels.

Ibn Batuta during his visit to Bengal in the first half of the fourteenth century (1334 A.D.) arrived at a port on the Bengal coast named Sudkawan is described as being

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very close to the great sea and that Ibn Batuta undertook a northern journey from Sudkawan by a boat along the Blue river (most probably the river Meghna). The description of Sudkawan strongly suggest its location near Chittagong (Gibb 1929: 246) and Sudkawan of Ibn Batuta's account are identical as their location suggests. Both of them were situated in the Samatata Harikela region of early Bengal. From the regular mention of Samandar as a major part in Arabic texts, a little room is left for doubt about the flourishing maritime trade on the Bengal coast in the early medieval period.

Arabic texts also establish Samandar's sea borne contacts with Uranshin (Orissa coast) Kanja (Conjeeveram in the northern part of the Coromandel coast) and Serendib (Sri Lanka) (Chakravarti 2002: 166). Ibn Batuta having planned to come to Bengal from the Maldives hired a ship and reached Sudkawan via Serendib and Ma'abar (coromandel coast) (Gibb 1929: 246). On his return journey, he sailed from Sunurkawan (Sonargaon, 24 km from Dhaka) for Jawa (Java) in a Chinese junk. Thus in the fourteenth century (Gibb 1929: 271), the Bengal coast was incorporated into the overseas network with maritime south-east Asia, in addition to its trade with the Maldives. The evidences from the account of Ibn Khurdadbeh and Al-Idrisi and also from the travellogues of Ibn Batuta (*Rihālah*) one can deduce that this port rose impressively from ninth to the fourteenth century and reached its zenith in the sixteenth century (Mukherjee 1982: 65-83).

### **Conclusion**

An overall discussion on the trade and commerce scenario and port cities has highlighted one interesting fact that eastern India in the stipulated time period was not in anyway behind her other regional counterparts. Our furnished data in the paper does not sustain the theory of a decline of trade and commerce as well as urbanization in this period. We have taken the help of epigraphical as well as literary sources (both indigenous and foreign) to subsist our views.

We have incorporated seven ports from two regions (Bengal and Orissa) of eastern India. These two regions share the coastal area of Bay of Bengal. Of these seven, two riverine e.g. Devaparvata (river kshīrodā) and Savar (river Bangshī) and the rest are all ports. We have minutely elaborated the prevailing trade routes, trade items of export and import, and the prevailing means of exchange of the period. The port cities mentioned in the paper were rich in commodities and were resided by resourceful merchants and visited by numerous foreigners. These foreign travellers have painted a glorious picture of these ports which is a reverse picture of the predominant decay hypothesis.

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# The Trans Meghna Region: Making of a Sub-Regional Identity

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We know that the region which is commonly called Bengal was in fact an agglomeration of certain sub-regions, of which the space to the east of Meghna is our subject of discussion. The large spatial segment to the east of Meghna was mainly divided into two kingdoms known as Samataṭa and Harikela in historical sources in different periods of time. The presence of Samataṭa in historical sources is earlier than that of Harikela. The relevant sources in the form of praśasti, copper plate charters, coins, indigenous literature, Chinese travel accounts and others indicate that it is not always possible to have any water tight demarcating line for these two geo-political units. Though these two units had their core territories, like the Comilla-Noakhali plain for Sāmataṭa and the Chiittagong coastal tract for Harikela, in different periods of time their contours overlapped and sometimes one territory subsumed the other (Ghosh & Pal, 2006: 78-96)). Thus the Trans Meghna region represents the present territories of Noakhali, Comilla and Chattogram in Bangladesh and Tripura in India and was known in early times as the Samataṭa-Harikela region. This was one of the sub-regions of the Bengal Delta. Beside these two kingdoms, in the orbit of Samataṭa-Harikela, we have to take into account another geo-political space which is known as present day Sylhet. It appears that this spatial unit, located on the Surma river, an offshoot of Meghna was under various political authority both from the north-west like Kāmarūpa and south-east like Harikela and at times was under local rulers too. Sylhet and Kāmarūpa were included in the network of interaction of Samataṭa and Harikela and thus any study of Trans Meghna should include these two geo-political units. With the formation of a sub-region, a cultural zone was also in the making. Morrison (Morrison, 1980: 115) was the pioneer in indicating that the Samataṭa region was culturally different from other areas of the delta and further researches supplement his position. In fact the geographical location of the region helped in evolving its own cultural ethos.

It is important to trace briefly how Samataṭa became an independent kingdom from being just located in the periphery of the Gupta empire. The term Samataṭa appears in the fourth century AD in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta as a frontier state together with Davāka (valley of the Kapili-Yamuna, Kolang rivers) and Kāmarūpa (Guwahati region of Assam), (Sircar, 1993: 266), thereby indicating its proximity to Assam. The rulers of these areas are referred to as simply *nṛpatis* of a particular region without even having their names mentioned. It is a pointer to the fact that these rulers were perhaps merely chiefs and so did not gain enough attention from the Gupta ruler to be referred to by name. During the time of the other Gupta rulers succeeding Samudragupta, we have no information regarding Samataṭa. That kingdoms flourished in the Comilla and Faridpur areas

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in the 5th and 6th centuries is however attested by epigraphic records. The Gunaighar copper plate dated 507 AD suggests that *Mahārāja* Vainyagupta was ruling in the region. (Sircar, 1993: 340-345). The copper plate mentions a division called *Uttara mandala* and a *jayaskandhāvāra* at Kripura which are likely to have embraced a small and compact area within the broader region of Samataṭa.

Its distinct entity as separate from Vaṅga was established by the sixth century when Varāhamihira distinguished between Samataṭa and Vaṅga (Sircar, 1985: 47) in his *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*. Meghna, which practically separates Samataṭa from the rest of Bengal, formed the western boundary of Samataṭa and this explains its separation from Vaṅga as a geographical entity as well as its association with Davāka and Kāmarūpa as frontier belt of Samudragupta's empire (Bhattacharyya, 1977: 67). Chinese travelers like Hsüan Tsang (7th century AD) and Sheng-chi (2nd half of the 7th century AD) also mention Samataṭa in their records (Islam, 2003:39). In the period following the disintegration of the Gupta empire, we have only numismatic evidence to prove Śasāṅka's rule in the Samataṭa area. No other sources refer to Śasāṅka's rule in the area concerned. In the second half of the 7th century three local powers, known as the Rātas, Nāthas and Khadgas were ruling in Samataṭa and in its environs. In the 7th century AD, Samataṭa emerges as an independent monarchical set up, one of its kings claiming the designation of *Samataṭeśvara* or Lord of Samataṭa. The Kailan plate of Śridhāraṇa Rāta (c. 665-675) shows that he and his father Jivadhāraṇa bore the epithet of *Samataṭeśvara* and had the hill fort of *Devaparvata* encircled by the river Kṣirodā as their administrative headquarter (Sircar, 1947:221-41). The Chinese priest Sheng-chi also found Rājabhaṭa, the Rāta ruler ruling over Samataṭa (Bhattacharyya, 1977: 66) which indicates that Samataṭa was coterminous with the kingdom of the Rātas. The Khadgas (c. 625-705 AD) on the other hand had Karmānta (Barkanta in Comilla) as their royal residence wherefrom they issued their early land grants (viz., the Ashrafpur plates). D. C. Sircar suggests that they originally ruled in Vaṅga (Dhaka-Faridpur-Bakharganj area and adjoining regions) and DevaKhadga (c.658-73 AD) extended his power to Samataṭa. (Sircar, 1973:23). It may be pointed out that both of these two lines of rulers owed their allegiance to a superior power. Towards the end of the 7th century or in early 8th century, the Khadgas were supplanted by a Deva family. Ānandadeva, a ruler of the Deva family calls himself *Vaṅgālamṛgānika* and had his new capital at Vasantapura (year 39) whereas the old capital was damaged by an invasion of a strong enemy force and had to be abandoned. The question that needs to be addressed here is why Ānandadeva is using the epithet 'Vaṅgāla' as we know that Vaṅgāla was a separate sub-region and we have no direct evidence of Deva rule in Vaṅgāla. Vaṅgāla adjacent to Vaṅga (Dhaka, Vikrampur & Faridpur) of the early medieval period is the coastal region of present day south-eastern Bangladesh. According to D. C. Sircar, probably by Vaṅgāla, the Bakharganj subdivision was meant and may be the Devas were ruling in this area (Sircar, 1982 :102). The rule

of the Devas in Samataṭa perhaps suffered a blow with the occupation of the region by Gopāla (c.AD 750-775), the founder of the Pāla dynasty, as indicated by the Sian inscription of Nayapāla. (Sircar, 1982: 102-22). It is true that this inscription refers to the association of the Pālas with Samataṭa but it was perhaps not the earliest political stronghold of the Pālas as suggested recently (Chakravarti, 2011: 18). We have no other evidence except the Sian inscription of a later period and the image inscriptions of the time of Mahipāla I to suggest the presence of the Pālas in Samataṭa. On the other hand we know of a ruler called Bhavadeva (c. AD 775-800), contemporary to Dharmapāla, issuing copper plate from Devaparvata, the capital of Samataṭa (Gupta Choudhury, 1979: 14-48). Moreover if Samataṭa would have been an early political stronghold, the records of the early Pāla rulers would have referred to the possession of Samataṭa or issued copperplate charters from the area. It appears that the local Deva dynasty recovered the region after the initial occupation of Samataṭa by Gopāla. Abdul Momin Chaudhury also opined that sources do not suggest that Gopāla rose to power in southeastern Bengal (Chowdhury, 1967: 18). Though Rāmacharitam (Basak, 1969) mentions that the royal lineage of the Pālas originated from the ocean, here we cannot take it as Samataṭa because from the Sian inscription (Sircar, 1982: 113-114) it is clear that the ancestor of Dharmapāla attacked Samataṭa and so, it was not their place of origin. After this period till the time of the Chandra ruler Trailokya Chandra (c. AD 905-925), the history of Samataṭa is unknown to us. We only learn that Trailokyachandra defeated the Kambojas in Samataṭa. What appears from the foregoing is that from the seventh century till sometime in the ninth century, Samataṭa maintained its independent political entity as a local kingdom of the trans-Meghna region.

It will be in order now to look at the history of the other geo political space, the immediate eastern neighbour of Samataṭa, i.e. Harikela, which appeared in inscriptional, numismatic as well as textual sources from about the same period, i.e., the seventh/eighth century. According to I-tsing (Takakusu, 1896:44) who met Wu-hing near Nālanda in the 1st year of Ch'ui-king period (A.D. 685), the latter sailed from Simhala for the northeast and “came to Harikela, which was the eastern limit of Eastern India [Tung T'ien (-chu)] and of *Jambudvipa*”, (Mukherjee, 1975: 115-119). This has been taken to suggest that Harikela must have had a littoral area within its limits. In the Glossary of Hui-lin (A.D. 817) *Samatata*, *Ho-lai-ka-lo* and *Tāmralipta* were placed near *Kāmarūpa* (Bhattacharyya, 1977: 70). It is not clear whether it was an inland territory or a littoral area or both. In indigenous sources Harikela finds mention at about the same period. In the *Ārya Mañjuśrī Mulakalpa* (8th century AD), (Sircar, 1982: 48), Vaṅga, Harikela and Samataṭa are cited as distinct entities. I-tsing also refers to Samataṭa thereby indicating that Harikela was that region which lay to the east or south-east of the Comilla and Noakhali districts (Takakusu, 1896: 44). Thus the name *Harikela* denoted by the second half of 7th century AD only the coastal area of Chittagong.

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It appears that a Buddhist line of rulers ruled in Chittagong. To it belonged Devātideva, Kāntideva and Attākaradeva although no connection can be established between them (Bhattacharya, 2000:471-487). A land grant of Devātideva dated 715 A.D. refers to *Harikelayam* (the people of Harikela). Till date this is the first epigraphic reference to *Harikela*. The Chittagong area over which he ruled is described as *Khasa-maka*.

Probably Devatideva belonged to the Non-Aryan Khasa tribe (Bhattacharya, 2000: 471-487) mentioned as mercenaries in the land grants of the Pālas. Generally speaking, the Khasas have been described in the early literary texts as the people par excellence of the hilly region. According to the *Mahābhārata*, they inhabit various parts of the Himalayan range and have been described as fierce, ferocious and very powerful. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* (2.4.18) refers to the Khasas as well known fighters, though they were ultimately defeated by Bharata. That they formed a part of the fighter class is borne out by the *Manusamhitā* which states that previously they were Kshatriyas. From the *Rājatarangini* we learn that the Khasa chiefs of Rajapuri intermarried freely with the Kshatriya rulers of Kashmir. Thus these references more or less point to the Kshatriya character of the Khasa people which they acquired through their military prowess. (Ghosh, 206). This Kshatriya character of the Khasa people is clearly pronounced in the metal vase inscription where the ruler Devatideva belonged to the Khasa tribe. Though we have no information about his origin in the vase inscription, we may suggest that the Khasa tribe resided at the Chittagong hill tracts. It is specifically mentioned in the inscription that land transaction was made from the residents of the Chandrabhattārika grāma situated in the *Khasa maka* (Khasa kingdom). Under Kāntideva (c. 800-825) Harikela came to form a *mandala* with its capital (*vāsaka*) at Vardhamānapura identified with present Bara-Uthan village of the Patiya Upazila in Chittagong. If Harikela was a *mandala*, what was the name of the kingdom of Kāntideva is not known. Harikela continued as a *mandala* under Rājādhīrāja Samaramrgārīka. Attākaradeva (early tenth century). According to Gauriswar Bhattacharya, he was an Arakanese who ruled over this region. He was probably a subordinate of Trailokya Chandra (c. 905-925), the father of Śrīchandra (Bhattacharya, 1993: 323-338). Recently a coin showing the name Attākara has been found which is in line with the Ākara coins. (Islam, 2012). If they are the same person, then he belonged to the Ākara family of Chittagong. His capital was also Vardhamānapura.

According to the Rāmpāl plate and Bogra plate (Flemming, 2010: 223-244 ) of Śrīchandra, Trailokya Chandra (c. 900-925) became king at Chandradvipa (Bakharganj) and he was the ‘mainstay’ of the royal family of Harikela (*harikelarājakakudacchatrasmi-tānāmśriyā[m]*).

We have no idea about the overlords of the Chandras. The statement has been taken to mean that this family rose to supreme power from the position of a subordinate status in Harikela (Sircar, 1982: 106). Later Vāṅga, Samatāta and Śrīhatṭa formed the Chandra

kingdom. It has been suggested that with this extension of the Chandra power to Śrīhatṭa from their base at Harikela the name came to be associated with the region of Vaṅga and Śrīhatṭa (Mukherjee, 1975:115-119). However it is to be remembered that the records of the Chandras do not identify Vaṅga with Harikela or refer to Śrīhatṭa and Vaṅga within the limits of Harikela. It is only in the texts of *Yādavaprakāśa* (11th century) and *Hema Chandra* (11-12th century), we have the phrase *Vaṅgāstu-Harikeliya* identifying Harikela with Vaṅga.

The most important evidence regarding Harikela, however, is coins. These coins have been found from Mainamati, Jobra in Chittagong, Sylhet, Belonia subdivision of Tripura, Sandoway in southern Arakan and other places (Rhodes, 2002: 1-12). Stylistically, typologically and metrologically these pieces have been related to the Chandra dynasty of Arakan. They again served as prototypes to the silver pieces of the Ākara family of Chittagong of about 8-10th century. They were prevalent from c. 7th to 12/13th century (Mukherjee, 1975: 115-119). Thus Harikela as a distinct territorial entity made its presence felt for a pretty long time.

It has been suggested that the expansion of the sphere of political influence of the Chandras ultimately resulted in its association with Vaṅga (Mukherjee, 1975:115-119). It appears that the Chandras left Harikela and established their independent kingdom embracing Vaṅga, Śrīhatṭa and Samatāta whereas their overlords, i.e., the kings of Harikela continued to hold that territory. If the Chandras exercised any authority on Harikela they would have inscribed their names on the Harikela coinage which they did not do. That the Chandras did not donate any land in the Chittagong region also supports the contention. On the other hand the Ākara rulers of Chittagong issued coins in their own name.

The *Hudud al-A'lam* refers to Hṛkṇḍ (taken to be the same as Harikela) as a place on the seacoast together with N. Myas, Urshin, S.M.N.D.R and Andras (Minorsky, 1937:87). The reference to Harikela along with Samandar as places on the seacoast may be noted. Either it is a misinterpretation on the part of the author as within the Harikela country lay the port of Samandar or it might so happen that Harikela was the name of a kingdom as well as the name of a place identifiable with present day Chittagong.

We shall briefly refer back to Samatāta here. In the middle of the 9th century Samatāta's status of an independent kingdom suffered a blow with the Chandra occupation of Samatāta. According to the Paschimbhag copper plate his army conquered Samatāta and captured its capital Devaparvata and attacked Vaṅga. Shortly before the Chandra occupation of Samatāta, the city of Devaparvata appears to have been devastated by the Kambojas. The charter was issued from the *jayaskandhāvāra* at Vikramapura, which hereafter became the political centre of the Chandras and the subsequent rulers of this region. Samatāta came to form a *māṇḍala* along with other *māṇḍalas* like *Yolamāṇḍala*, *Nānya māṇḍala*, etc. We find that the first Mainamati plate of Lañha Chandra refers to *Pattikeraka* (Paitkara pargana in

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Comilla) in Samatāta *maṇḍala*. This ‘*Pattikeraka*’ later on transformed into a small kingdom. One may however note that with the coming of the Chandras, there is a shift in the location of politico-administrative centre from Devaparvata to Vikramapura. This was due to the more extensive power base of the Chandras which necessitated a shift in the capital and to a more viable geographical location. Thus during the reign of Chandras Vikramapura loomed large as an important administrative centre and Samatāta was transformed to a mere administrative division like *maṇḍala*. Its independent political identity lost. Loss of Samatāta’s political identity however led to the integration of the two kingdoms under a single political authority and the incorporation of the Śrīhatṭa area within the Chandra kingdom helped in the making of a coherent unit in the Trans Meghna area.

We shall now look at the history of Śrīhatṭa, which is well known but needs to be recapitulated. From the Nidhanpur copper plate of Bhāskar Varman (Sharma, 1978: 38-54) we learn that at least southern Sylhet was within the control of the Varmans of Kāmarūpa from 6th century to the 7th century. This conclusion is on the basis of the location of the land granted which has been identified with Panchakhaṇḍa in Sylhet. From the Varmans at least a part of Śrīhatṭa passed on to the hands of the local rulers of Samatāta, viz. namely the Nāthas. Sāmanta Lokanātha granted lands in a ḥāṭavi bhukhaṇḍa in Śrīhatṭa, obviously with the idea of reclamation of forest lands for expansion of settlement. Next reference is from the Kalapur plate of Sāmanta Marunda Nātha (Gupta Chaudhury, 1967: 74-80) where too the grant of a ḥāṭavi bhukhaṇḍa is referred to. Kalapur in southern Sylhet is contiguous to the Comilla area. After that we have no reference to Śrīhatṭa in epigraphic sources till the coming of the Chandras as master of the trans-Meghna. The name Śrīhatṭa as an administrative division i.e. *maṇḍala* finds mention in the Chandra records. Thus like Samatāta and other *maṇḍalas* Śrīhatṭa *maṇḍala* too became a part of the sub-region of trans-Meghna under the Chandras. In the records of the Kāmarūpa rulers the area of the granted land formed the southern part of Sylhet. When the Chandras extended their sway till Sylhet, it was the southern region. We do not know who was ruling in northern Sylhet. Perhaps it was the forefathers of Govinda Keśavadeva. When the Chandra power was on the decline Govinda Keśavadeva dared to venture into the southern part of Śrīhatṭa and thus in the middle of the 11th century Śrīhatṭa graduated from the status of a *maṇḍala* to a separate kingdom for in the Bhatera copper plate (Gupta Chaudhury, 1967:153-191) Govinda Keśavadeva is mentioned as the ruler of Śrīhatṭa *rājya*. Here is a case where from an administrative division, Śrīhatṭa became an independent kingdom whereas in case of Samatāta it was otherwise.

Śrīhatṭa has often been identified with Harikela in some literary texts. In a manuscript of the *Rupacintāmani koṣa* (Saka year 1515) Harikela is said to be the name of Śrīhatṭa. The reading is *Harikeli* in *Kalpadrukōṣa* according to which it was a synonym of Śrīhatṭa.

According to the *Kṛtyasāra*, *Harikola* was the same as *Śrīhaṭṭa deśa*. Thus it has been suggested that in the early medieval period *Śrīhaṭṭa* was known as Harikela (Mukherjee, 1975: 115-119.). The *Kalpadrukosa* of *Keśava* (16th century) also states that *Śrīhaṭṭa* was a synonym of Harikela (Sircar, 1985: 49). The cause for the identification of Harikela with *Śrīhaṭṭa* has been explained in the light of the extension of Śrīchandra's power to Sylhet (Mukherjee, 1975: 115-119). But we have to remember that the dates of the above texts are far removed from the period of Śrīchandra.

The coherent political character of the sub-region was disturbed by the ouster of the Chandras in the second half of the 11th century by the Varmanas and finally we find that during the later part of the Sena rule an independent dynasty known as the Deva dynasty was formed in the eastern side of the Meghna river. As mentioned earlier, in the thirteenth century, Pattikera (Patikara or Paitkara is a pargana near Mainamati), which was within Samataṭa, formed a separate kingdom. Two kings, *Harikāladeva* (1204-30AD) and *Viḍḍharadeva* (1230-50AD) are known (no connection can be established between these two kings) and their records come from Mainamati. The name *Harikāla* is interesting. It may be an example of a territorial name being converted into the name of a ruler. The second plate refers to the grant of land at *Vataganga viṣaya* (not identified) in Samataṭa *mandala* of *Puṇḍrabhukti*. (Morrison, 1974: 100). Devaparvata lost its importance by this period and is not heard of any more. Pattikera developed relationship with Arakan. From the Mainamati copper plate dated AD1220 and issued in the 17th regnal year of king *Ranavāṇkāmalla Śrī-Harikāladeva*, it is learnt that *Dhādi-eba*, a minister of the king, donated a piece of land in favour of a *vihāra* dedicated to *Durgottara* (a form of the Buddhist goddess *Tārā*) in the town of Pattikera. *Dhādi-eba* is noted as shining in the good practices of the Sahaja cult. From his name and also the name of his father *Hedi-eba* it has been surmised by some scholars that the family might have been of Burmese origin (Bhattacharyya, 1933: 282-289). Thus Pattikera as a kingdom developed at the very heart of Samataṭa which came to form a *mandala* under the Chandras and shrank in size. Gradually it lost its independent identity and merged in to the expanding Paundrabhukti (which originally embraced north Bengal during the Gupta rule). *Dāmodaradeva* (1230-55AD) and his predecessors probably ruled as feudatories of Senas of Vikramapura although Damodara's allegiance was nominal. In his Mehar copper plate, Samataṭa appears as a *mandala*. Available evidence till date suggests that the name Samataṭa can be last seen in the Mehar copperplate. (Sircar, 1982:47).

Apart from political identity, the territorial name Samataṭa was interestingly extended to a land measuring unit and thus in the Barrackpur plate of the Sena ruler, their first record of land grant, refers to the use of Samataṭiya nala in the *Khādi vishaya* (south 24 pgs), (Sircar, 1982:120) of *Puṇḍravardhana bhukti*. The plots to be granted were measured by *Samataṭiya nala*. According to some scholars Samataṭa extended as far as the 24 parganas

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in the west. It is however difficult to conform to this view. In the first place mere use of *Samataṭiya nala* as a unit of measurement is not enough of a proof to suggest the inclusion of the territory, where this unit of measurement was used, within the region of Samataṭa. On the other hand the use of *Samataṭiya nala* in the region of south 24 paraganas may indicate the importance of this unit of measurement as a standard one and in the absence of any such unit in the *Khāḍi vishaya* this standard unit was used. The rich agricultural base and organized political authority of Samataṭa region may have caused the introduction of a standard unit of measurement but it is interesting to note that in the inscriptions of the rulers of Samatata we have no reference to *nala* as a measuring unit. No inscription mentioning the name of Samataṭa have been found from south 24 paraganas. Use of a geo-political nomenclature for referring to a system of measurement might be taken to be a marker of identity. Recent discovery of a single silver coin bearing the name Samataṭa is interesting. This coin can be placed in the same period of the early Harikela coinage (c.7th century AD), (Mukherjee & Acharjee, 1999-2000:173). Though nothing conclusively can be said from a single find but one can probe the necessity of issuing a coin bearing the name of Samataṭa when coins bearing the name of Harikela were much in circulation in the same territory. It might be an expression of independent identity. We have a copper plate charter of Gopāla II, recently published by Ryosuke Furui, where we find that the origin of the engraver Dakkadāsa is shown by the expression ‘sat Samataṭa-janma’. According to Furui, the same expression is also found in case of the engravers of Bhagalpur plate of Nārāyanpāla and the Jajilpara plate of Gopāla III and it is interesting that they mentioned their Samataṭa origin as an indicator of their identity. (Furui, 2008, 71). It appears that it was important for them to distinguish between their place of profession and their place of origin and so they proudly claimed their Samataṭa identity.

On the question of political identity of a politico-geographical unit, we have seen from the above discussion that the Trans-Meghna area as an integrated sub-region under a single political authority survived only for around 200 years. For the rest five hundred years within this sub-region there were different political centers under local authorities. It can perhaps be said from a case study of the Samataṭa area that local authorities survived in this area as long as regional powers allowed them to survive. In case of Samataṭa, it survived as an independent kingdom as long as it was far from the gaze of a regional power. The Pālas made their presence felt in the political scenario of northern India. Their core territory lay in present day Bihar and North Bengal. Samataṭa lying in the periphery did not draw their attention when they were in the height of their power. It can also be argued that perhaps the Palās were also not aware of or did not recognize the potential of the port of Samandar and so there was no distinct attempt to control the region. The Arab Geographers have of course mentioned Samandar as within the kingdom of ‘Dhm’ identified with Dharmapāla, (Chakravarti, 2002: 165) but it has to be borne in mind that Dharmapāla being

an important power of the then eastern India was well known to them. Moreover their knowledge of the Gurjara Pratihāras and Rāshatrakūtas also suggest that they were having some kind of information about the three major powers of the period. Hence they wrongly attributed the port of Samandar to Dharmapāla's kingdom. Therefore the absence of Pāla interest made it possible for the Devas and Varmans to rule independently. The mention of Mahipāla with respect to two image inscriptions (Bhattasali, 1924: 103-105) from Samatāta may be taken as a brief presence of Pāla power in this region. However one may also add that these images could also be brought from the Puṇḍravardhana region. In fact the stone of these images do not conform to the stone used in the sculptures from Samatāta. Samatāta's linkage with Puṇḍravardhana enabled migration of families of scribes (Furui, 2008: 71) and perhaps also artisans from Samatāta to Puṇḍravardhana. On the other hand when the Chandras emerged as a regional power Samatāta lost its independent identity and was turned into Samatāta maṇḍala within Puṇḍravardhana bhukti under the Chandras who had under their sway the geo-political spaces of Samatāta, Vaṅga and Śrīhaṭṭa. For the Chāndras, having its initial base in the Chittagong region, it was imperative that they conquer the Samatāta area, make it a spring board and move further to the west of the Meghna and upwards to the Śrīhaṭṭa area. In their attempt to integrate a larger area within their territory, they preferred to leave the core territory of Harikela in the hands of the local rulers.

Language and script are ingredients of region formation. Whether any new style of writing developed in this sub-region or was there commonality between the four sub-regions in the scripts that could be discerned from epigraphs needs to be studied. From a preliminary study of the palaeography of these inscriptions it has been suggested that no new style developed in this region; rather there is a clear semblance of the writing of the mid-Ganga valley, which suggests the close interaction between the Ganga valley and this region (Pal, 2009).

The network of relations of this sub-region in the north-west was not only restricted to the Ganga Valley, it also extended in the north-east to Kāmarūpa and in the south east to Arakan. Countries of South-east Asia were also perhaps included in the broader area of interaction particularly in case of Buddhism. Kāmarūpa and Puṇḍravardhana acted as important hinterlands for the region. Puṇḍravardhana acted as a corridor for the land-locked Ganga valley to reach the sea. It had definite connection with the Arakan region (presently a province of Myanmar) also. The characteristics of the scripts found in eastern India in the 7th-8th centuries are found in contemporary inscribed documents from Arakan. Again the 'ha' used in writing 'Harikela' in the coins is borrowed from Arakan. Samatāta's linkage with the Arakan region is also understood from numismatic evidence. Coins of Dharmavijaya (c. AD 665-701), ruler of Arakan, have been recovered from Akyab (in central Arakan) and also from Mainamati. (Wicks, 1987:56) The fact that no coins have been found in the area of the Chittagong hill tracts would indicate that the chief communication links

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between the Bengal delta and central Arakan was by way of the Bay of Bengal and not overland. It is interesting to note that gold coins of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta have been found in a hoard from Paglatek, near Goalpara in Assam. This has been found around a temple and might have reached here by way of trade as a donation to the temple by a trader from Samataṭa. It may be noted that apart from trade relation, there was perhaps a political relation between Samataṭa and Kāmarūpa. It is evident from the inscriptions of Rāta and Nātha rulers of Samataṭa that they were feudatory rulers owing suzerainty to a superior power. The great similarity between the seals attached to the Comilla copper plate of Loka Nātha and the Kailan copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta betray their association with the same broad system of administration under a common sovereign power. It has been suggested that this sovereign power might have been the ruler of Kāmarūpa as we know that the rule of Kāmarūpa extended in and around the Sylhet region, even if for a short period (Mukherjee, 1988: 281-286). The route which ran from Samandar in Chittagong to the Kāmrūpa region or the Ganga valley was partially under the political control of the rulers of Samatata. Moreover Samandar was surely linked with other feeder ports in the region. A riverine port like Devaparvata must have played an important role in the inland riverine communication in coastal Bengal thus providing the vital linkage between different areas (Chakravarti, 2002: 166-167). In fact the geographical location of the region helped in evolving its own cultural ethos. Trans-Megna was a sub-regional node (Chattopadhyaya, 2003: 87), which did not stand in isolation.

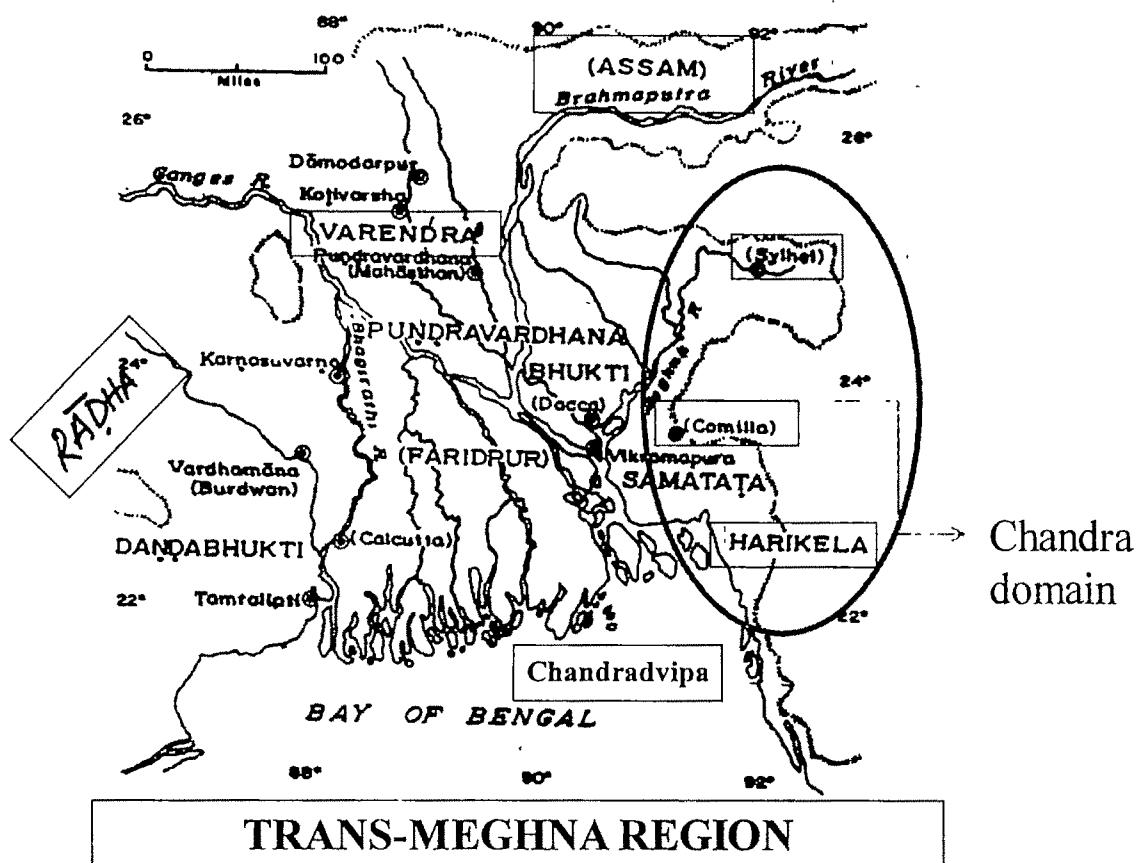
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# Rangpur Copper Plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I, Year 5

RYOSUKE FURUI

## Introduction

In the last three decades, a substantial number of copper plate inscriptions of the Pāla kings were discovered or rediscovered: four in Indian State of West Bengal,<sup>1</sup> three in Bangladesh<sup>2</sup> and two in the private collection abroad.<sup>3</sup> Among them, the Mohipur plate of Gopāla II, year 3, was re-discovered by the present author from the photographs of copper plate inscriptions kept by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh. The copper plate inscription to be dealt with in this study is another re-discovery from these photographs.

The plate in concern belongs to Mahīpāla I, whose reign falls in the period between the end of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh. Apart from the present one, the four copper plate grants of Mahīpāla I are known to date. They are Belwa plate dated year 2 (Sircar 1987a: 1-9),<sup>4</sup> Bangarh grant of year 9 (Banerji 1982a), Biyala inscription dated year 35 (Furui 2010) and Panchbibi plate, of which practically nothing is known (Cf. Gouriswar Bhattacharya 1994: 206).

The present inscription records the donation of two villages to a *brāhmaṇa*. Its find spot is untraceable except that it was somewhere in Rangpur district. The current location of the plate is also unknown and it may have been lost in the confusion during and after Bangladesh Liberation War, as the chief photographer of the department infers. The present study is based on the three sets of photographs, which are not perfect but still readable in most parts (PLATES 1-4).<sup>5</sup>

It is a single copper plate broken in the middle. Its size is unclear from the photographs. There is no seal but a projection with a square-shaped hole indicating the presence of a seal detached from the plate. This projection is also ripped off from the plate itself, as is clear in a photograph (PLATE 3). The plate is inscribed breadthways on both sides in Gaudīya script. It has in total 56 lines, of which 32 are on the obverse (PLATES 1-2) and 24 on the reverse (PLATES 3-4). The last two lines are shorter than others. The crack in the middle runs through lines 15 and 16 on the obverse and 45 to 47 on the reverse. Fortunately most letters in these lines are readable and obliterated letters are still inferable by comparison with other grants of the same king, as these lines contain eulogy and stereotyped injunctions shared by them. The corrosion of the plate also renders some letters on both sides indistinct and especially makes it difficult to read lines 28 and 29, though other parts are still readable by enlargement of scanned photographs. Orthographically it shows some characteristics common to the inscriptions of Bengal in the early medieval period.

*V* and *b* is not differentiated and the consonants after *r* tend to be reduplicated, though not always.

## Contents

The inscription has letters *ni* engraved at both ends of the first line on the obverse. It seems to be the abbreviation for *nibuddha*, ‘confirmed’, and indicate the endorsement by relevant officials. This feature is common to all the other grants of Mahīpāla I so far published (Sircar 1987a: 6, 1.1; Banerji 1982a: 326, 1.1; Furui 2010: 103, 1.1).

The inscription proper starts with a symbol denoting Siddham and an auspicious word *svasti*. Its contents can be divided into four parts, namely, the eulogy of the Pāla kings in twelve verses (ll.1-20),<sup>6</sup> the practical information of grant in prose (ll.20-48), seven benedictory and imprecatory verses (ll.48-54) and finally names of the messenger and engraver with their descriptions in a verse for each (ll.54-56).

The eulogy of the Pāla kings in this inscription is almost the same as the one in the Bangarh plate of Mahīpāla I (Banerji 1982a: 326, ll.1-24). It is also common to his Belwa and Biyala grants, except that the order of the eleventh and twelfth verses is inverted in the last two grants (Sircar 1987a: 6-7, ll.1-23; Furui 2010: 103-104, ll.1-21). The eulogy begins with the adoration of Lokanātha, namely the Buddha, and Gopāla I (ll.1-3, v.1). The next verse eulogises king Dharmapāla, the son of the latter, by a double entendre comparing him to the Ocean. He is described as the birth place of Lakṣmī with Makaras (*sa-makara*)/ the origin of wealth levying equal tax (*sama-kara*), the one bearing the burden of the earth, and the only refuge for the mountains/kings (*bhūbhṛt*) approaching him in fear of cutting of their wings/destruction of their troops (*pakṣa-ccheda*). He is also described as the one devoted to the protection of customs (*maryādā*), an abode of heroism and great with the shining whiteness of milk ocean (ll.3-5, v.2). The third verse introduces his resembling younger brother named Vākpāla, who is great like Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma, by his virtues. He was the only one abode of policy (*naya*) and valour (*vikrama*), abided by his brother’s order and made quarters under one umbrella, namely under the rule of only one king, devoid of female flag bearers of enemies (ll.5-7, v.3). From him was born a victorious son named Jayapāla, who cleansed the world by the acts of Upendra (Viṣṇu). He calmed the enemies of Dharma (pāla) in the battle and brought comforts of the universal kingship to Devapāla, his elder cousin (ll.7-8, v.4). Vigrahapāla I, his son like Ajātaśatru, was the stream of water that is the clean sword destroying decorations of wives of his enemies, namely making them widows by killing their husbands (ll.8-9, v.5). He procreated his son king Nārāyaṇapāla, on whose body the protectors of quarters (Dikpālas) deposited their divided substances for the protection of the earth. With his own deeds, the latter decorated the throne of *dharma* gained properly, which had the stone of foot stool illuminated by crest jewels of other kings (ll.9-11, v.6). His son, the protector of middle world (the earth) named

Rājyapāla, had fame known to the water beds in deep bottom of the ocean and to the abodes of deities which were equal to the kings of the lineage (ll.11-12, v.7). His son Gopāla III was born to him and his consort Bhāgyadevī, the daughter of Tuṅga, the moon of Rāṣṭrakūṭa family with lofty crown. For long time, Gopāla III was as if the only husband of the earth with manifold garments of four oceans studded with lustre of many gems (ll. 12-14, v.8). Beloved Lakṣmī who was *utsāha*, *mantra* and *prabhu-śakti* served with loveliness her master, the king, who was full of royal virtues, as if she exceeded her co-wife, the earth (ll.14-16, v.9). From him was born Vigrahapāla II, as if the moon showering ten millions of rays was born from the sun at proper time. Like the moon, he, who is dear to eyes, clean, having rays/branches of art (*kalā*) and rising, dispersed the heat of the world (ll. 16-17, v.10). His great war-elephants, like clouds, rushed to the ridge of Snow Mountain after drinking pure water in eastern country abundant of water, wandering freely in *candana* forests at the foot of Malaya Mountain and making coolness in the Desert by dense raindrops (ll.17-19, v.11). From him was born king Mahīpāla I, all whose enemies were destroyed in the battle because of the pride of his arms and whose lotus like feet were laid on the heads of kings, after he had stabilised the ancestral kingship/kingdom (*rājya*) unruly and lost (ll.19-20, v.12).

The practical information of the grant starts with the reference to issuing place, the military camp (*jayaskandhāvāra*) located in Indrāñī-grāma with its stereotyped description in reference to the enormous naval fleet, elephants, cavalry and infantry common to almost all the Pāla grants (ll.20-24). Then Mahīpāla I, the issuer of the grant, is mentioned with the titles of *paramasaugata*, *parameśvara*, *paramabhattāraka* and *mahārājādhirāja* and the expression denoting his acceptance as a legitimate heir (*pādānudhyāta*) by his father *mahārājādhirāja* Vigrahapāla II (ll.24-26).<sup>7</sup>

According to their ranks, the king honours, announces and orders all the people related to (*samupagata*) the two villages, Rājikāgrām-odraṅga in Uddhanna-kaivartta-vṛtti-vahikala belonging to Trapatagrāma-maṇḍala and Kuñjabhaddhik-ādāma belonging to Śivagrāma-maṇḍala. Both *maṇḍalas* are within Phāṇita-vīthī of Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti (ll. 26-38). The former village is described as accompanied by (*saṃeta*) the land belonging to itself like pond (*puṣkarinī*) and resting place of elephants (*hasty-āśaya*) (1.27). It measures five thousands nine hundreds and ten with a reference to some tracts related to *kirātas*, which cannot be comprehended satisfactorily (1.28). The latter village is described as accompanied by (*sahita*) the land of Kṣapāṇḍaka-śubha-hāsa belonging to itself and measures forty one *kulyavāpas* and one *ādhavāpa* (ll.29-30). The addressees are divided into two categories. The first is ‘all the royal officials’ (*aśeṣa-rāja-purusa*) or ‘subordinates of his royal majesty’ (*rājapād-opajīvin*) including forty five officials and titles and unnamed others (ll.30-37). The second is residents beginning with *mahattamas*, *uttamas* and *kutumbins* reaching *medas*, *andhras* and *candālas*, accompanied by *brāhmaṇas* (1.37).

## Rangpur Copper Plate Inscription of Mahipāla I, Year 5

The statement of the king is expressed as a direct quotation of his words. He said that the aforementioned two villages were donated by him to a *brāhmaṇa* for the increase of merit and fame of his parents and himself in the name of Bhagavat Buddha, after bathing in the river Gaṅgā following the injunction on the day of winter solstice (*uttarāyana-saṃkrānti*) (ll.38, 41-42, 44-45). The privileges and conditions of the grant are listed as follows: as far as its own border, grass-field and pasture (*sva-sīmā-tṛṇa-pūti-gocurapuryanta*), with flat land (*su-tala*), with raised ground (*s-oddeśa*), with mango and mahua trees (*s-āmra-madhūku*), with water place (*su-jalusthala*), with ditches and saline spots (*sa-gurtt-oṣaru*), with market and landing-place (*su-huṭtu-ghaṭṭa*), with fine of ten offences (*su-duś-āpucāru*), with right to catch thieves (*su-cauroddharaṇa*), exempted from all the burdens (*purihṛta-surva-pīḍa*), without entrance of *cāṭas* and *bhuṭas* (*a-cāṭa-bhuṭa-praveśa*), without anything taken away (*akiñcid-grāhya*), accompanied by contributions of all the revenue, tribute, tax, cash tax and so on (*sumasta-bhūgu-bhoga-kuru-hiruny-ādi-pratyāya-sumetu*), by the rule of land reclamation (*bhūmicchidru-nyāyena*), and as long as the sun, the moon and the earth exist (*ā-candr-ārku-kṣiti-sumukālum*) (ll.38-41).

The donee is Śrī-Đingaramiśradevaśarman of Bharadvāja *gotra* and Bharadvāja, Āṅgirasa and Bārhaspatya *pravara*. He belongs to Maitrāyaṇī school and knows theory (*mīmāṃsā*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), logic (*tarka*) and magical knowledge (*vidyā*). He or his family originated from (*vinirgata*) Tharkkārikā and he is residing in Kaccābhīṣṭikā belonging to Vidyāpottaka. He is the grandson of Hetukeśvaradeva and the son of Graheśvaradeva (ll. 42-44).

Then the king requests 'all of you', denoting all the addressees, to agree with the donation and future kings to approve and protect it out of respect for merit of land donation and in fear of falling to the hell in case of its violation (ll.45-46). He also tells residing cultivators to obey the order of the donee and make the stipulated contributions of revenue, tribute, tax, cash tax and so on at proper time (ll.46-48). The issuing date is mentioned as the twelfth day of month Phālguna in the fifth year of the king's reign (l. 48). It is followed by seven benedictory and imprecatory verses (ll.48-54, vv. 13-19). The verse after them mentions the appointment of Vāmana as a messenger of the royal order (ll.54-55, v. 19). The last verse says that the present grant was engraved by artisan (*śilpin*) Bharadeva, the son of Śūkdradeva originating from Poṣalī-grāma (l.56, v. 21).

### Implications

The eulogy of the Pāla kings found in this inscription has been known since the discovery and publication of the Bangarh plate of Mahipāla I. However, the discoveries of new inscriptions, especially copper plate inscriptions of the kings of Dharmapāla's line unknown to the earlier scholars, require the reinterpretation of some verses. What is important on this account is the verses related to Vigrahapāla I and his son Nārāyaṇapāla. While the latter

is called king (*prabhu*) and described as reigning over other kings, there is no description indicating the royal status of the former (ll. 8-11, vv. 5-6). In view of the fact that three more kings in two generations, namely Mahendrapāla, his brother Śūrapāla and the latter's son Gopāla II, reigned after Devapāla in the line of Dharmapāla, it is highly possible that Nārāyaṇapāla, the great grandson of Vākpāla, ascended the Pāla throne after Gopāla II, the same of Dharmapāla. This point is endorsed by the Badal pillar inscription, which was recently re-interpreted in the light of new Pāla plates (S. C. Bhattacharya 2008b). This inscription contains the eulogy of a family of *brāhmaṇas* who served the Pāla kings as councillors or priests for generations (Sircar 1983: 87-91). As S. C. Bhattacharya correctly pointed out, it records the deeds of five *brāhmaṇas* associated with the six Pāla kings, with indirect references to Mahendrapāla and Gopāla II, which were overlooked by the previous scholars (S.C. Bhattacharya 2008b: 75-8; Sircar 1983: 88, ll. 7-8, vv. 7-8, 89, ll. 13-14, v. 13 (Mahendrapāla); l. 18, v. 17 (Gopāla II)). What to note are the absence of any reference to Vigrahapāla I and the description of Guravamīśra, the fifth *brāhmaṇa* associated with the Pālas, serving both Gopāla II and Nārāyaṇapāla (S. C. Bhattacharya 2008b: 78-9; Sircar 1983: 89-90, ll. 18-20, vv. 17-19). These facts support the view that Nārāyaṇapāla ascended the throne immediately after Gopāla II. Though the reference to Vigrahapāla I with the title of *mahārājādhirāja* in the Bhagalpur plate of his son Nārāyaṇapāla seems to indicate his royal status,<sup>8</sup> the eulogy in the plate lacks any descriptions of him as a king (Sircar 1983: 82, ll.13-16, vv. 8-9, 83, 1.24, v. 17). The conferment of the royal title to him can be a retrospective measure to legitimise the ascendance of his son, who belonged to the parallel branch, to the throne. It also accords well with the reference to *dharma-āsana* 'acquired properly' (*nyāy-optātam*), which seems to emphasise his legitimate ascendance to the throne (l.11).

The descriptions of the donated villages have some important implications for the rural history of early medieval Bengal. Rājikāgrām-odraṅga, the first village, is said to have been in Uddhanna-kaivarta-vṛtti-vahikala (l. 27). Village with similar suffix, Osinna-kaivarta-vṛtti, is mentioned in the Belwa plate of the same king as one of donated settlements (Sircar 1987a: 7, 1.29). *Kaivartas* were deemed to be a social group engaging in fishery and boatmanship and mentioned as the lowest section of the rural society in at least one Pāla grant (Furui 2009: 325, 1.36). However, these cases seem to indicate the growth of some section of them to a class of landholders, as *vṛtti* denotes a land granted for livelihood or some service (Sircar 1966: 381). It is remarkable that Osinna-kaivarta-vṛtti also belongs to Phāṇita-vīthī, the same administrative unit as the one mentioned in the present inscription (Sircar 1987a: 7, 1.28). This fact may indicate concentration of landholding *kaivartas* and probable location of the territory of the *kaivarta* king who served the Pāla kings as a subordinate ruler and then revolted against them in Varendra, North Bengal (Sastri and Basak: 1.12 commentary, 1.29 commentary).

The reference to *kirātas* in relation to this village is also interesting. Though the meaning of relevant portion is not clear, it seems to indicate the inclusion of some land related to hill (*kudhra*) or tamarind tree (*cukrā*), where some actions are supposed to be taken by *kirātas* (1.28). As a generic term, *kirāta* denotes any forest tribes, especially in eastern India (Parasher 1991: 190-1). Their appearance in this context connotes proximity of the concerned village to the forest area inhabited by these people and further the agrarian expansion through the reclamation of forest tracts. The inclusion of resting place for elephant (*hasty-āśaya*) in its premise also attests to the proximity to forest.

Another point of interest is the measurement (*parimāṇa*) of the donated villages. Rājikāgrm-odraṅga measures five thousands nine hundreds and ten, without any reference to the unit of measurement (II.28-29). Similar descriptions of settlements with the word ‘standard’ (*prāmāṇa*) accompanied by numbers in hundreds and thousands are found in the two inscriptions of Gopāla II and the Belwa and Biyala plates of Mahīpāla I. As I have discussed elsewhere, it seems to be the production from land or village counted in *purāṇa*, a unit of silver currency which was rather notional in this period (Furui 2009: 321-2). The present case can be the same. On the other hand, Kuñjabhaddhik-ādāma measures forty one *kulyavāpas* and one *ādhavāpa* (1.30). Both are units of land measurement, which were mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions issued in North Bengal under the Gupta regime in the fifth and sixth centuries. While there are several opinions on the size of land indicated by these units, which can be different according to locality, their interrelation is somehow established: one *kulyavāpa* corresponds to thirty two *ādhavāpas*.<sup>9</sup> What is remarkable is the coexistence of different system of measurement in the villages under the jurisdiction of the same administrative division, in this case Phāṇita-vīthī. Such a phenomenon is also observable in the first plate of Gopāla II dated year 4, in which each system is applied to different settlements (Furui 2009: 325, II.26-28).

As for the donee, his affiliation to Maitrāyaṇī school of Black Yajurveda is remarkable (1.42). This is so far the only one case of a *brāhmaṇa* donee of this school mentioned in the inscriptions of Bengal. While the schools of White Yajurveda like Kāṇva, Mādhyandina and Vājasaneyā appear in the several copper plate inscriptions in Bengal, a reference to the schools of Black Yajurveda is rare.<sup>10</sup> Only other known case is the Nidhanpur plates of Bhāskaravarman, which include nine Cārakyas and one Taittirīya among two hundred five *brāhmaṇa* donees (Niyogi 1967: 67-72). Another point of interest is the village from which his family originated. It is mentioned as Tharkkārikā in the present plate (1.43). It can be identical with Tarkāri in Śrāvasti, locatable around present Hill-Balurghat area of South Dinajpur district of West Bengal (Sircar 1971: 294-8), which was known to be a Brahmanical centre providing highly qualified *brāhmaṇas*.

The messenger Vāmaṇa seems to be the same as *mantrin* bhaṭṭa-Vāmaṇa who fulfilled the same duty in the Bangarh grant of the same king (Banerji 1982a: 328, 1.61). As for the

engraver, the reference to Posalī-grāma as his place of origin is important (1.56). Including the present plate, there are six Pāla grants engraved by artisans from this village. All of them belong to the reigns of Mahīpāla I and his grandson Vigrahapāla III, which is assignable to the period from the end of the tenth century to the latter half of the eleventh. The analysis of names of the engraver and his father recorded in each inscription shows three families involved in the duty of engraving grants of the Pāla kings. The first is the family of Candrāditya, whose two sons engraved the Belwa and Biyala plates of Mahīpāla I respectively.<sup>11</sup> The second is Śūdradeva and his son Bharadeva mentioned in the present inscription (1.56). The third is the family of Vikramāditya, whose son Mahīdhara(deva) engraved the Bangarh grant of Mahīpāla I and grandson Śāśideva acted as the engraver of the Amgachi and Bangaon plates of Vigrahapāla III (Banerji 1982a: 328, 1.62; Banerji 1982b: 298, 1.49; Sircar 1987b: 57, ll.48–49).<sup>12</sup> The shared name endings, -āditya and -deva, may or may not indicate the interconnection of these families. At least the presence of an artisan group specialised in engraving the Pāla copper plate inscriptions in this particular village is clear.

Among the place names, Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti is well-known as an administrative unit covering wide range of North Bengal. Phāṇita-vīthī is mentioned in the Belwa grant of Mahīpāla I as one of the three administrative units under the aforementioned *bhukti* (Sircar 1987b: 7, 1.28). It also appears in the Belwa plate of Vigrahapāla III, year 11, as Phāṇitavīthī-viṣaya (Ibid.: 11, 1.27). The reference to the administrative unit common to the last two plates, both of which were discovered from village Belwa in present Palsa union, Ghoraghat *upazila*, Dinajpur district of Bangladesh (Khan 2007: 11), may indicate the proximity to this area of Rājikāgrām-odraṅga and Kuñjabhaddhik-ādāma, the villages mentioned in the present inscription, and Trapatagrāma-maṇḍala and Śivagrāma-maṇḍala, the administrative divisions to which these villages belong. There is no clue to the identification and location of Indrāṇī-grāma, issuing place of the grant, though it can also be located in some proximity. It is same for Kaccābhīṣṭikā belonging to Vidyāpottaka, where the donee was residing.

### Text<sup>13</sup>

[Metres: Verses 1, 8 *Srugdhurā*; verses 2, 3, 6 *Śārdūlavikrīḍita*; verses 4, 7, 10 *Vusuntutilakā*; verse 5 Āryā; verse 9 *Indrvujrā*; verse 11 *Mundākrāntā*; verse 12 *Mūlinī*; verses 13–17, 20, 21 *Anuṣṭuubh*; verse 18 *Śālinī*; verse 19 *Puṣpitāgrā*]

### Obverse

1. ni<sup>14</sup> Siddham<sup>15</sup> svasti//maitr[ī]n=kārunya-ratna-pramudita-hṛda-ni
2. yaḥ preyasīṁ sanda[dhā]nah samyakṣa[mvo(mbo)]dhi-vidyā-sarid-amala-[ja]la-[kṣāli]t-ājñāna-pāñkah/jitvā yaḥ kāmakāri-[pra]bhavam=abhibha[vam]
3. sa(śā)śvatī[ṁ] ḡra[pa] śā[ntīṁ] sa śrimāl=Lokanātho jayati daśava(ba)lo ‘nyaś=ca Gopāladevah//[1\*] Lakṣmī-janma-niketanaṁ samakaro v[o]-

Rangpur Copper Plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I, Year 5

4. dhūm kṣamah kṣmā-bharat=pakṣa-ccheda-bhayād=upasthitavatām=ek-āśrayo  
bhūbhṛtām/marāyād-paripālan-aika-nirataḥ śaury-ālayo ‘sm[ā]-’
5. d=abhūd=dugdh-ā[m]bho]dh[i]-vijāsa-hāsi-mahimā śrī-Dharmmapālo nr̄pah//[2\*]  
Rāmasy=eva gṛhīta-satya-tapasas=[ta]sy=ānurūpo guṇaiḥ Sau-
6. m[i]trer=[u]da[pā]di tulya-[ma]himā Vākpāla-nām-ānujāḥ/sa śrīmān=naya-vikram-  
aika-vasatir=bhrātuḥ sthitāḥ śāsane śūnyāḥ śatru-pa-
7. [tā]kinibhir=akarod=ek-ātapatrā diśah//[3\*] tasmād=upendra-caritair=jjagatūm  
punānah putro [va(ba)]bhūva vijayī Jayapāla-nā-
8. mā/[dha]rmma-dviś[ām] śamayitā yudhi Devapāle yaḥ pūrvvaje bhuvana-rājya-  
sukhāny=anaiṣṭ/[4\*] śrīmān=Vigrahapālas=tat-sūnur=Ajāta-
9. śatrūr=iva jātāḥ/śatru-vanitā-prasādhana-vilopi-vimal-āsi-jala-dhārah//[5\*] dikpālaiḥ  
kṣiti-pālanāya dadhataṁ dehe [v]i-
10. bha[ktā]n=guṇān śrīmantam janayām=va(m=ba)bhūva tanaya[m\*] Nārāyaṇam sa  
prabhūm yaḥ kṣonīpatibhiḥ śiromāṇi-rucā-śliṣṭ-āṅghri-pī-
11. ṭh-opālam nyāy-opāttam=alañcakāra caritaiḥ svair=eva dharmm-āsanam//[6\*] toy-  
āśayair=jjaladhi-mūla-gabhbīra-garvbha(bbha)ir=ddev-ālāyaiś=ca ku-
12. la-bhūdhara-tulya-kaksaiḥ/vikhyāta-kīrttir=abhavat=tanayaś=ca tasya śrī-Rājyapāla iti  
madhyamalokapālah//[7\*] tasmāt=pūrvva-kṣi-
13. tidhrān=nidhir=iva mahasām Rāṣṭrakūṭ-ānvay-endos=Tuṅgasy=ottuṅga-mauler =  
dduhitari tanayo Bhāgyadevyām prasūtāḥ/śrīmān=Go-
14. pāladevaś=cirataram=avaner=eka-patnyā iv=aiko bharttā=bhūn=naika-ratna-[dyu]ti-  
khacita-catuḥ-sindhu-citr-āñśukāyāḥ//[8\*] yam
15. svāmina[m] rāja-guṇāīr=ānūnam=āsvate cārutay=ānuraktā/utsāha-[man]tra-prabhu-  
śakt[i]-[lakṣmīḥ pṛ\*]th[v\*]jīm sapatnīm=[i]va ś[ī]-
16. layantī// [9\*] tasmād=va(d=ba)bhūva savitūr=vvasu-[ko\*]ti-varṣī kā[lena] cand[ra]  
[i]va Vigrahapāladevah/neṭra-[pri]yeṇa vīmalena ka-
17. lāmayena yen=oditena dalito bhuvanasya tāpah//[10\*] deśe prāci pracura-payasi  
svaccham=āpiyā toyam svairam bhārntvā tad-a-
18. nu Malay-opatyakā-candaneṣu/ kṛtvā sāndrair=Mmaruṣu jaḍatā śīkarair=avbhra  
(bbhra)-tulyāḥ Prāleyādreh kāṭakam=abhajan=yasya senā-
19. gajendrāḥ//[11\*] hata-sakala-vipakṣaḥ saṅgare vā(bā)hu-da[r]ppād=anādhikṛta-  
viluptam=rātya(jya)m=āsādya pi[tr]ya[m]/[ni]hita-caraṇa-padmo bhūbhujām mūrddhni  
tasmād=abhavad=a-
20. [va]nipālah śrī-Mahīpāladevah//<sup>16</sup> [12\*] sa khalu Bhāgīrathī-patha-pravarttamāśva  
(na)-nānā-vidha-nau-vāṭaka-sampādita-

21. setu-va(ba)ndha-nihita-śaila-śikhara-śreṇī-vibhramāt/niratiśaya-[gha]na-ghanāghana-  
ghatā-śyāmāyamāna-vāsara-
22. lakṣmī-samārvadha(bdha)-santata-jalada-samaya-sandehāt/udīcīn-āneka-na[ra]pati-  
prābhṛtikṛt-āprameya-haya-vāhinī-
23. khara-kur-otkhāta-dhūlī-dhūsarita-digantarālāt/parameśvara-sevā-samāyat-āśeṣa-jamvū  
(mbū)dvīpa-bhūpāl-ā-
24. nanta-pādāta-bhara-namad-avaneḥ Indrāṇī-grāma-samāvāsita-śīmaj-jayaskandhāvārāt  
paramasaugato ma-
25. hārājādhīrāja-śī-Vigrahapladeva-pād-ānudhyātah/ parameśvaraḥ paramabhattārako  
mahārājādhīrāja-
26. hī śīmā[n=Ma]hīpāladevah kuśalī/śī-Puṇḍravarddhana-bhuktau Phāṇita-vīthyām  
Trapatagrāma-maṇḍal-āntahpā-
27. ty=Uddhanna-k[ai]var[tta]-vṛ[tt]i-vahikale puṣki(ka)rīṇ[i]-hasty-āśay-ādi-sva-samva  
(mba)ddha-bhūmi-sahita-Rājikāgrām-odraṅge
- 28.<sup>17</sup> kirātabhi[s\*]=sama[ktavī(?)]-huta-[ku]dhroge [talaya(?)]-gamvi-hāsa-cukrā-da(da)s-  
o(ś-o)ttara-navaśat-ādhike pañca-sahasra-pari-
29. māṇe/tathā Śiva[grāma]-maṇḍal-āntahpāti-Kṣa[pa]ṇḍaka-śubhahāsa-sva-samva(mba)  
ddha-bhūmi-sahite Kuñjabhaddhi-
30. kādāme/ādīhā(dha)vāp-ādhik-ai[ka]catvāriṇśat-kulyavāpa-parimāṇe/samupagat-āśeṣa-  
rāja-puruṣān
31. rāja/rājanyaaka/rājaputra/rājām[ā]tya/mahāsāndhivigrahika/mahākṣapaṭalika/  
mahāsāmanta/mahā-
32. senāpati/[ma]hāpratīhāra/daussādhasā[dha]nika/mahādaṇḍanāyaka mahākumārāmātya/  
[rā]jas[thā]nīy-o-

#### *Reverse*

33. parika/dāsā(śā)parādhika/cauroddharaṇika/dāṇḍika/dāṇḍi(ṇḍa)pāśika/śaulkika/  
gaulmika/ kṣetrapa/ p[r]<sup>18</sup>ānta-
34. pāla/kotṭapāla/aṅgarakṣa/tadāyuktaka-viṇiyuktaka/hasty-aśv-oṣṭra-nau-va(ba)la-  
vyāpṛtaka/ kiṣora-vaḍavā-go-ma-
35. hiṣy-aj-āvik-ādhyakṣa/dūta-presaṇika/gamāgamiṇika/abhitvaramāṇa/viṣayapati/  
grāmapati/ tarika/ Gau-
36. ḍa/Mālava/Khasā/Hūṇa/Kulika/Karṇṇāṭā/Lāṭā/cāṭā/bhaṭa/sevak-ādīn=anyāmīś=c=  
ākīrttitān/rāja-pād-opajīvina-
37. hī/prativāsino vrā(brā)hmaṇ-ottarān/mahattam-ottama-kuṭumvi(mbi)-puroga-med  
āndhra-caṇḍāla-paryantān/yath-ārhamī mānayāti/ vo(bo)-

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38. dhayati/samādiśati ca/viditam=astu bhavatām/yath-opari-lihitam=idam grāma-dvayam/sva-sīmā-tṛṇa-pūti-gocara-pa-
39. ryantam/sa-talam s-oddesa(śa)m/s-āmra-madhūkam/sa-jalasthalam/sa-gartt-osaram/sa-haṭṭa-ghaṭṭam/sa-daśāpacāram/sa-cauroddharaṇam
40. pariḥṛta-sarvva-pīḍam/a-cāṭa-bhaṭa-praveśam/akiñcid-grāhyam/samasta-bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiran-y-ādi-pratyāya-sametam/
41. bhūmicchidra-nyāyen=ā-candr-ārkka-ksiti-samakālam/mātā-pitror=ātmanaś=ca puṇya-yaśo ‘bhivṛddhaye/ bhagavantam Vu(Bu)ddha-bha-
42. tā(tīṭā)rakam=uddiśya/Bharadvāja-sagotrāya Bharadvāj-Āṅgirasa-Vā(Bā)rhaspatya-pravarāya Maitrāyanī-śākh-ādhyāyine
43. mīmānsā-vyākaraṇa-tarkka-vidyā-vide Tharkkārikā-vinirggata-Vidyāpottaka-samva(mba)ddha-Kaccābhīṣṭikā-[vāsta]vyā-
44. ya Hetukeśvaradeva-pautrāya Graheśvaradeva-putrāya śrī-Dīngaramiśradevaśa rmmaṇe uttarāyaṇa-saṃkrā[ntau] Gaṅg[ā]-
45. yām=vidhivat=snātvā śā[sa]nī-kṛtya pradata(tta)m=asmābhiḥ/ato bhavadbhiḥ sarvvair=ev=ānumantavyam bhāvibhir=a[pi bhū]pati-
46. bhi[h] bhūme[r\*]=ddāna-[phala-gaura\*]vāt/apahara[ne ca] mahānaraka-pāta-bhayāt/dānam=idam=an[umody=ānupāla]-[nīyam/ pra\*]-
47. tivāsibhiś=ca kṣetrakar[aih] ājñā-[śra]vāṇa-vidheyī-bhūya [yathā]-kāla[m samucita\*]-[bhāga-bhoga]-kara-hiran-y-ādi-[pratyāy]-[opanaya\*]-
48. h kārya iti//samvat 5 Phālguna-dine 12// bhavanti c=ātra dharmaṁ-ānuśāmsinah/slokāḥ //va(ba)hubhir=vasudhā da[ttā rājabhi]-
49. s=Sagar-ādibhiḥ/yasya yasya yadā bhūmis=tasya tasya tadā phalan//[13\*] bhūmim yah pratigr̥hnā(hnā)ti yaś=ca bhūmin [prayacchatī/] ubhau
50. tau puṇya-karmma(rmā)ṇau niyatam svargga-gāminau//[14\*] gām=ekām svatta(rṇa)m=ekañ=ca bhūmer=apy=arḍham=āṅgulam/ haṭa[n=naraka]m=āyāti
51. yāvad=āhūta-samplavan//[15\*] ṣaṣṭim=varṣa-sahasrāṇi svargge] modati bhūmidah/ākṣeptā c=ānumantā ca tāny=eva narake vaset//[16\*] sva-dattā[m] pa-
52. ra-dattām=vā yo hareta vasundharām/ sa viṣṭhāyām kṛmir=bhūtvā pitṛbhiḥ saha pacyate//[17\*] sarvvān=etān=bhāvinah pārthivendrān=bhūyo bhūya-
53. h pārthayaty=eṣa Rāmaḥ/ sāmānyo=yan=dharma-setu[r\*]=nṛpāṇām kāle kāle pālānīyah kramenā// [18\*] iti kamala-dal-āmvu(mbu)-vindu-lolām
54. śriyam=anucintya manuṣya-jīvitañ=ca/sakalam=idam=udāhṛtañ=ca vu(bu)ddh[v]ā na hi puruṣaiḥ para-kīrttayo vilopyāḥ// [19\*] Vāmanas=abhinandi-
55. ta-guṇair=vijayati yataḥ[\*] ten=ātra Vāmanas=amau(sau) śāsane dūtakah kṛtah// [20\*]
56. Poṣalī-grāma-niryāta-Śūdradevasya sūnunā[\*] idam śāsanam=utkīrṇṇā[m] śrī-Bharadeva-silpihā// [21\*]

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr. Tauhidunnabi, the chief photographer of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh for providing me photographs of the present inscription and information on it. I am also thankful to Mr. Mahabub Alam, then the curator of Mahasthan Museum, for his help in enquiring about the find spot of the plate, though we could not confirm it. The earlier version of this article was presented at Institute for Languages and Cultures of South Asia, Berlin Free University on February 10, 2011. I would like to thank Prof Harry Falk for giving me an opportunity and some valuable comments. This is a part of the research project entitled 'Study of the Ancient and Early Medieval Bengal Inscriptions: Compilation, Critical Edition and Annotation', funded by JSPS Excellent Young Researchers Overseas Visit Program.

## Notes

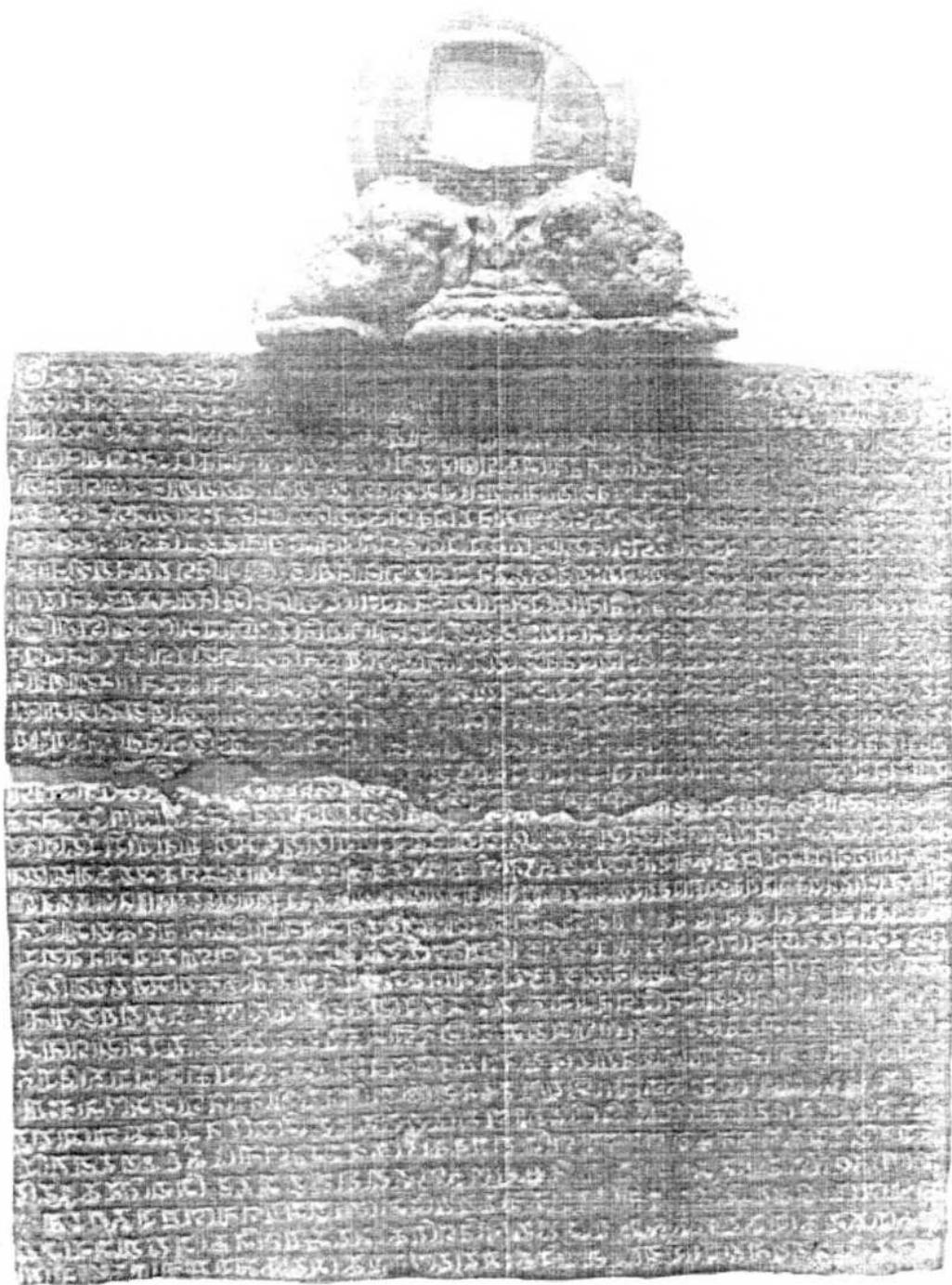
- 1 Indian Museum Plate of Dharmapāla, year 26 (S. C. Bhattacharya 2008a, Furui 2011); Jagajjibanpur Plate of Mahendrapāla, year 7, (S. C. Bhattacharya 2007); Rajibpur Plates of Madanapāla, years 2 and 22 (unpublished).
- 2 Mohipur Plate of Gopāla II, year 3 (Furui 2008); Biyala Plate of Mahīpāla I, year 35, (Furui 2010); Panchbibi Plate of Mahīpāla I (unpublished).
- 3 Suvarṇakārikā-dāṇḍa Plates of Gopāla II, year 4 (nos 1 and 2) (Furui 2009). According to the location mentioned in them, they seem to have originated from Dinajpur area of Bangladesh.
- 4 While Sircar read its date as samvat [5], it is samvat 2 according to my own reading from a digital photograph provided by Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata.
- 5 I provide in this article the two sets of photographs, of which the first was taken without chalk and the second with it. The third set is not put here due to its poor quality.
- 6 Bracketed numbers indicate lines in the plate. Verse numbers are also provided wherever necessary.
- 7 For the interpretation of *pādānudhyāta*, see (Ferrier and Törzsök 2008).
- 8 'mahārājādhirāja-śrī-Vigrahapäladeva-pādānudhyātah', (Sircar 1983: 83, 1.28).
- 9 For discussions on these units and their possible sizes, see (Sircar 1965: 411-4).
- 10 I would like to thank Prof. Shingo Einoo, my colleague, for reminding me of this fact.
- 11 Puṣyāditya (Sircar 1987a: 9, ll.57-58) and Dāmāditya (Furui 2010: 105, ll.55-56).
- 12 The last inscription refers to the father of Śāśideva as Mānhrīdeva, which is most likely misspelling of Mahīdeva, as Sircar suggests (Sircar 1987b: 51, 57 note 4).
- 13 Read from the photographs. Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh.
- 14 There are letters *ni* engraved on both ends of the first line.
- 15 Expressed by a symbol, a loop open to the left.
- 16 There is an obscure symbol, a horizontal stroke with a small circle at its bottom, engraved between *h* and double *dāṇḍas*. It seems to indicate punctuation.
- 17 Reading of this line is uncertain due to poor condition of the photograph.

## Rangpur Copper Plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I, Year 5

- 18 A horizontal stroke indicating *ra* in the conjunct *prā* is unclear and the engraver wrote a letter *ra* above *pā*, seemingly to indicate its insertion.

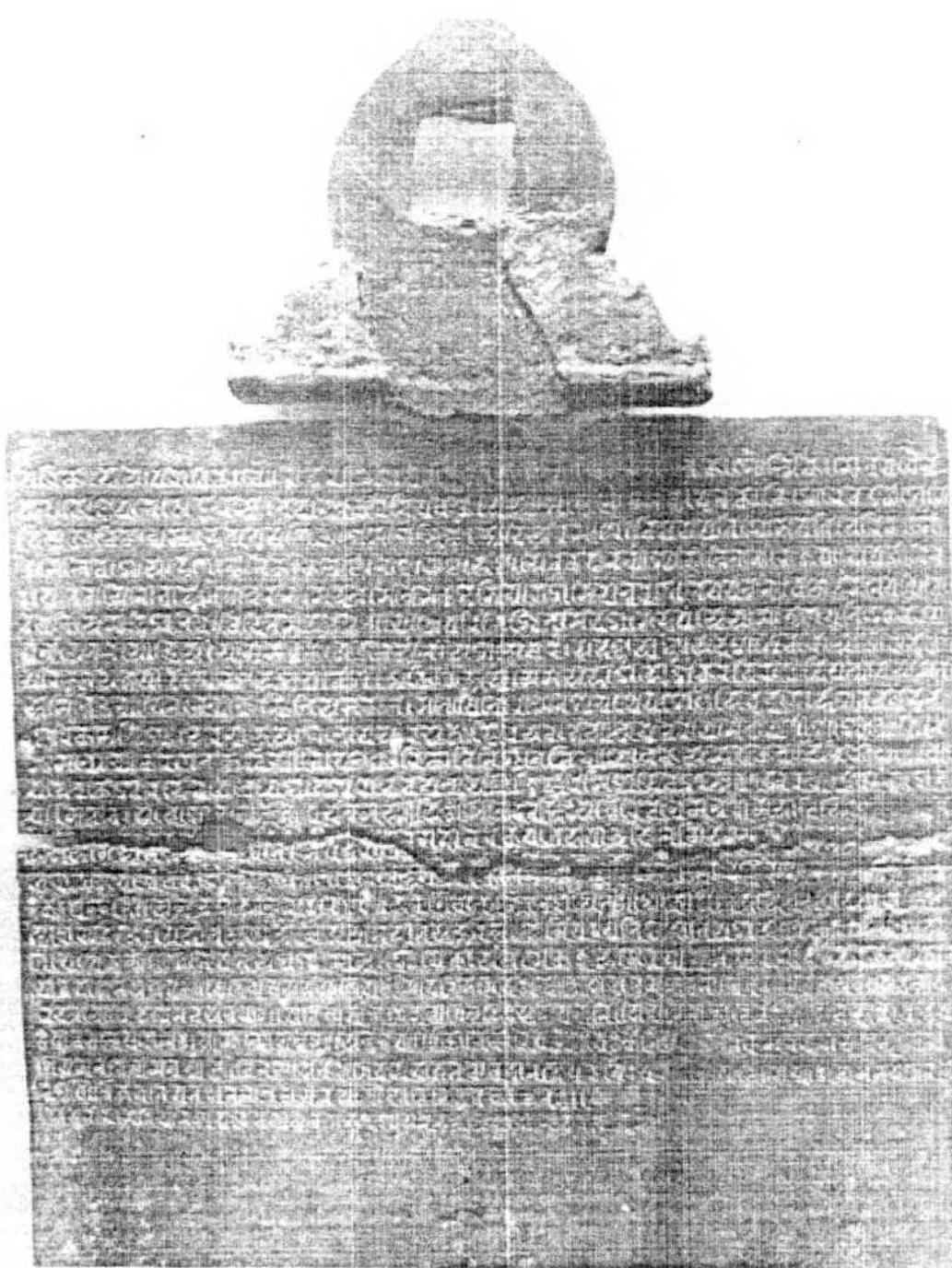
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**PLATE 1** Rangpur Plate of Mahipala I, Obverse. Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh.

Rangpur Copper Plate Inscription of Mahipāla I, Year 5



**PLATE 2** Rangpur Plate of Mahipāla I, Obverse (with chalk). Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh.



**PLATE 3** Rangpur Plate of Mahipala I, Reverse. Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh.



PLATE 4 Rangpur Plate of Mahipala I, Reverse (with chalk). Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Government of Bangladesh.

## Bangarh Maṭha and Somapura Vihāra: Two early Medieval Sacred Institutions under the Pālas

SAYANTANI PAL

The early medieval period in India saw the growth of regional features in different aspects of life, viz., polity, society, economy and culture. Regional features also permeated religious life and practices as local characteristics entered into the brahmanical Bhakti cults of sectarian nature. B. D. Chattopadhyaya points out that a curious convergence of emotional *bhakti* is recognizable in all major religious system of early medieval India and one common element among them is the growth of the institution of preceptor, the central figure in the *maṭha*. Royalty subscribed to the brāhmaṇical ideology of *deva-dvija-guru-pūjā* and the bond of *bhakti* was established between the individual and the deity. *Maṭha* centers evolved succession of *acāryas* who figure in epigraphs in terms akin to genealogies of royal families (Chattopadhyaya 2003: 152-171).

It is interesting to note that such ideology, characteristic of the Early Medieval period is noticeable both in the brāhmaṇical and non-brāhmaṇical monastic establishments. Such a situation can also invite competition and even conflicts between sacred establishments under royal patronage to attract more favour from the royalty. In this context the activities of the Bangarh *maṭha* and Somapura *mahāvihāra*, two important establishment of early medieval Varendrī (north Bengal) may be taken into account. Both were established and patronized by the Pālas who remained the dominant regional power of eastern India for a period of four centuries (8th-12th century).

In this context the growing importance of institutions like *vihāras* and *maṭhas*, apart from the temples may be taken into consideration. Ranabir Chakravarti points out that although *vihāras* had existed from an early period, the *maṭhas* assumed their importance particularly in the early medieval period. According to the *Amarakoṣa* *maṭha* is an institution where the preceptors and disciples live together. It may contain shrines also. It functioned as an educational institution, teaching the philosophy of the particular religious sect and also other branches of philosophy. Gradually construction of *maṭhas* came to be recognized as more meritorious than that of a temple (Chakravarti 1991: 30-40).

From the time of Śurapāla the Pālas had leanings towards Śaivism. At his mother's request Śurapāla granted villages to the temple of Māhaṭeśvara Śiva (named after his mother) at Vārāṇasī and the Śaivācāryas for their maintenance (Sircar 1982: 77-80, 213-218). It may be mentioned that the Pālas supported both the orthodox Pāśupata and unorthodox Mattamayūra sect. Mahīpāla (c. 977-1027 C.E) conquered Vārāṇasī and probably came into contact with the Durvāsā sect there. The Bangarh (South Dinajpur, West Bengal) Murtiśiva praśasti of Nayapāla (c. 1027-43 C.E) shows that Mahīpāla built

a huge *māṭha* there for the Śaiva ascetic Indraśiva who thus came to live there as it's in charge (Sircar 1982: 85-101). The *māṭha* was of *prāsāda-meru* type as described in the Liṅga Purāṇa (Bhattacharyya 2004: 13-22). Gold was used to adorn it. The site of the *māṭha* has been located at Sibbati in Bangarh. The reason for selecting Bangarh was that Varendra was the only stronghold of the Pālas in Bengal. This may be surmised from a study of the locations of their land donations on the basis of their copper plate charters. All of them record donations in North Bengal. It has also been pointed out that both at Bangarh and Mahasthan (which is not well documented as Bangarh) the Pāla phases witnessed the height of structural activities and prosperity, marking, in the words of B. D. Chattopadhyaya, a definitive phase in the formation of regional power structure with a strong base in Varendra and also a significant new phase in the history of the two major urban centres of this region (Chattopadhyaya 2003: 66-101). The establishment of a *māṭha* under the patronage of the royal family was certainly aimed at legitimizing and strengthening their base with the help of the Śaiva *acāryas*.

Indraśiva performed Śodṣa mahādāna. The Bangarh praśasti refers to the *mahāmāṭha* of Golgi from which the Rudras originated as Śaiva ascetics and Vidyāśiva, the progenitor of this line also originated from it. This Golaki *māṭha* school was propagated through an extensive network of monastic institutions (Talbot 1987: 133-146). It appears that the 'Golgi *mahāmāṭha*' of the Bangarh praśasti actually refers to the *māṭha* of this sect at Vārāṇasī which was the central *māṭha* (*mahāmāṭha*) where Vidyasiva, the first *acārya* mentioned in connection to the Golgi *mahāmāṭha* actually lived. Vidyāśiva's contemporary Sadbhāvaśambhu obtained many villages from Kalacuri Yuvarāja at Jabbalpur and established a Golakīmāṭha there. The establishment of a Golakīmāṭha had profound influence on the Pāla rulers and Nayapāla was the first Pāla ruler to be initiated into Śaivism. He acknowledged Sarvaśiva of this line as his preceptor. When Sarvaśiva went to *vāṇaprastha* his disciple Murtiśiva took charge. He was particularly interested in building temples. According to the Liṅga Purāṇa construction of Śaiva temples and enshrinement of *Siva liṅgas* are means of liberation and construction of different types of Śaiva shrines determines the various categories of attainment on the part of the devotee. Persons responsible for additions, alterations and renovation also get rewards (Bhattacharyya 2004: 13-22). Murtiśiva seems to have fully followed this ideal and established temples, buildings (*kīrti*), excavated large lakes, and constructed gardens. He also constructed a bāḍabhī for Bhavānī. D. R. Das points out that it was a particular type of temple and in canonical literature its construction has been advised for the installation of some particular deities. In West Bengal they were meant for the worship of Mother Goddess in different forms (Das 1997-99: 44-49). Rūpaśiva, his disciple and successor refuted many scholars all over the country and caused to be made an image of Murtiśiva and had written his eulogy. As C. Talbot observes, institutionally the most striking feature of the Golakīmāṭha school is that from its inception

the teachers were closely associated with royal benefactors (Talbot 1987: 133-146). Here, too, we find that from the beginning the ascetics of this *matha* attracted the attention of Mahīpāla who was instrumental in bringing them to Bangarh. They received their active support. As an academic institution its role is not clear though its teacher Rūpaśiva is said to have defeated the other scholars all over the country in debate. However, like the Andhra Golakīmatha its teachers did not come to be associated in administration at a later period. Murtiśiva was deified and N. Goswami suggests that an image from Dogachia indicates the rise of the cult of Murtiśiva. Interestingly it shows two associate ascetics who might be the *acāryas* of local *mathas* (Goswami 1996: 267-75). In that case the main Golakīmatha of Bangarh tried to extend its influence in the neighbouring areas through these associate *mathas*. Unfortunately we do not have any evidence to establish this as C. Talbot shows in the case of Andhra (Talbot 1987: 133-146).

Thus the Bangarh *matha* should have functioned as a node of dissemination of sectarian philosophical tradition of the Mattamayūraka sect of the Siddhānta school. *Acāryas* of Mattamayūra clan played a significant role in building *mathas* and they were mostly active in Central India and other parts of the country from the ninth to the thirteenth century (Parmeshwaranand 2004: 230). Similar kind of development might be noticed among the Pāśupatas in Western India. They ultimately succeeded in “adapting the imported cults of the Great Tradition to the religious and ideological reality of the peasants and tribals of the region” (Teucher 2005: 1-16). In this light the influence of the Bangarh *matha* on the local people including the tribals may be investigated, as this is the region where the Kaivarta revolt originated towards the end of the reign of Vigrahapāla III, the successor of Nayapāla. It may be pointed out that according to the Rāmacarita, after the liberation of Varendrī, Rāmapāla established many temples of Śiva in order to pacify his own people (Sastri 1969: 159). This sufficiently brings out the impact of Śaivism in Varendrī under the Pālas and the Bangarh *matha* must have played a significant role in it.

How far Buddhism continued to have the support of the Pāla rulers? Did the preceptors of this religious faith succeeded in drawing sufficient favour from the royalty like the preceptors of the Bangarh *matha*? Buddhism was the dynastic religion of the Pālas and all of their land grant charters bear the Dharmacakra seal. Both Dharmapāla and Devapāla are said to have built many monasteries, according to the Tibetan tradition. The activities of the Somapura *mahāvihāra* at Paharpur may be taken into consideration in this context since it was situated very close to the Śaiva *matha* of Bangarh. This *matha* appears to have been constructed by Dharmapāla, as is evident from a seal from Paharpur referring to it as the Dharmapāladeva *mahāvihāra* (Dikshit 1938: 55-90). But the composite character of the *vihāra* from the very beginning has recently come to light as a result of the publication of the Indian Museum copper plate of Dharmapāla by Ryosuke Furui. It throws light on the early days of the *vihāra*, during the reign of Dharmapāla. It records the land grant of his

*mahāsāmanta* Bhadranāga to a *vihāra* constructed by him at Antarāvanikā, a *gandhakūṭī* constructed by him in the Somapura *mahāvihāra* and a *vihārikā* constructed by his consort at the same *mahāvihāra*. Thus the subordinate ruler of Dharmapāla had a component of the *mahāvihāra* constructed by him and his consort. Furui draws a parallel with the Nalanda monastery which had *vihārus* established by several kings within it (Furui 2011: 145-156). Thus from the very beginning not only the ruler, but also his subordinates took active interest in the establishment.

The different line of ascetics associated with this *vihāra* in different periods is clear from a number of fragmentary inscriptions from Paharpur. One line of ascetics had the name ending *garbha*. Another line of monks had the name ending *mitra* (Dikshit 1938: 55-90). In this context the Nalanda inscription of Vipulaśrīmitra brings out some significant facts (Sircar 1983: 60-62). It records his offering of a casket at a temple of god Khasarpaṇa, repair works to the monastery of Pitāmaha (Buddha) at Choyanḍaka, installation of an image of Jina Dīpañikara at Harcapura and the building of a temple of Tārā, with an attached court and a tank, the reconstruction of cells and presentation of gold ornaments for the embellishment of a Buddha image at Somapura. A monastery was erected and made over to the Mitras, i.e., the line of ascetics to which he belonged. The cells renovated by Vipulaśrīmitra at Somapura must have belonged to this great monastery. The inscription further refers to Karuṇāśrīmitra of Somapura who went to heaven when his house was set on fire by an army of Vaṅgāla. His disciple was Maitrīśrīmitra whose disciple was Aśokaśrīmitra and the latter's disciple was Vipulaśrīmitra (Sircar 1983: 60-62). Thus here we may notice that the same kind of medieval ideology came to be prevalent among the Buddhists as noticed among the Śaiva ascetics of Bangarh *maṭha*. Their ascetics also began to frame their genealogies, appointing poets to compose them like royal persons. Thus the medieval *bhakti* ideology penetrated the Brāhmanical as well as the Buddhist religions.

The monastery of Nalanda functioned as the node for dissemination of their religious ideology and was well connected with the monastery of Paharpur as well as others of North Bengal. Like the Śaivas too they were engaged in building works on large scale and in creating a network among their institutions.

The relation between these two establishments is, however, not clear. But in view of the growing conflict between the Śaivas and the Buddhists in early medieval India, some points may be taken into consideration. It is interesting to note that the opening verse of the Nalanda inscription runs thus, ‘hearing the name of the Glorious Lord (who is) the wheel of Dharma, for so many times, the body of Saṁsara, (bhava) grows weak and he swoons lifelessly’ (Saloman 1998: 301-302). Saloman also points out that bhava alternatively (or simultaneously) might be taken as referring to Śiva and he noticed a *birodhāvasa* (rhetorical contradiction) in *bhavo.....apunarbhavam*.

Even if not documented, it is not unlikely that some kind of reaction developed among

the ascetics of the Buddhist establishments of Nalanda and Paharpur regarding the activities of the Bangarh Śaiva *matha* particularly in view of the close proximity of Bangarh with Paharpur. There is problem regarding the dating of the Nalanda inscription. On the basis of palaeography it has been placed in the first half of the twelfth century by N. G. Majumdar (Majumdar 1984: 97-101). D. C Sircar ascribes it to the middle of the twelfth century (Sircar 1983: 60-62). According to him this incident of the attack of the Vaṅgāla army might have happened about a hundred years ago from Vipulaśrīmitra. Thus we may place the incident in about the middle of the eleventh century, during the reign of Nayapāla. The invaders of Vaṅgāla were either the Candras or Varmans among whom D. C. Sircar favours the latter as they were non-Buddhists (Sircar 1982: 153). It may also be mentioned that Jātavarman (c.1055-1073 C.E.), who established the fortunes of the Varman family was probably a subordinate of Kalacuri Karṇa and married his daughter Viraśrī (Sircar 1982: 137). The Kalacuris also supported the Mattamayūras and Vidyāśiva's contemporary Sadbhāvaśambhu obtained many villages from Kalacuri Yuvarāja at Jabbalpur and had established a Golakīmatha there in the middle of the tenth century. In such a backdrop the atrocities of Jatavarman's army on a teacher of the Somapura monastery is not unwarranted. Opposition between Buddhism and Śaivism has been noticed and the iconography of eastern India shows aggressive Buddhist gods. R. S. Sharma points out that a tenth century pantheon from Nalanda shows the dominance of the Buddhist deity Aparājīta over Śaivite deities (Sharma 2001: 225). However, the deity trampled by Aparājīta was actually Vighna (obstacle) and not any Śaiva god (Bhattacharya 2003: 95-101).

Thus the ascetics of the Bangarh *matha* succeeded in spreading a considerable influence among the local people, their *acāryas* were deified. Ranjusri Ghosh also points out that the sculptures from Bangarh are dominated by those belonging to the Śaiva faith (Ghosh 2010). On the other hand, the role of the Somapura *vihāra* at a later period is not clear and there is also no evidence of the royal patronage. If the Pāla rulers had extended the same amount of support to this monastery as they had done in its early days, it could not have been devastated by the Vaṅgāla army. Such a consequence is not altogether unexpected as Buddhism gradually lost the royal support as it could not give royalty the legitimization which the Brāhmaṇical tradition was able to give the king. A close bond developed between the ascetics of such institutions and the rulers who in their turn looked for legitimization to the religious leaders. There was the need to secure protection from the divine, as the position of the king appeared unstable, faced with the assertions of the subordinates. In view of such a situation we can explain the growing popularity and extensive activities of the Bangarh *matha* while such evidence is lacking for the Somapura *vihāra*. The different lines of ascetics associated with it do not appear to have any substantial support from the royalty. Such a situation also sufficiently explains the aggressiveness of the Buddhist deities of this period in Eastern India and it may be pointed out in this connection that the angry

## Bangarh Matha and Somapura Vihāra: Two early Medieval Sacred Institutions under the Pālas

Buddhist goddess Aparājītā trampling Vighna originated in Bodhgaya in the Pāla period (Bhattacharya 2003: 95-101).

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# A Note on the Mosque Inscriptions on a Pedestal of a Bengal Sultan in the Varendra Research Museum

NOOR BANO SATTAR

This paper is an attempt to understand the iconoplasic art and the epigraphic record of two inscribed pedestal of Viṣṇu images discovered from the Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. These two objects of art are now housed in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi under Accession number 2446 and Accession number 314. The epigraphic records incised at the back of the images concerned are engraved with an Arabic script. The two inscriptions belong to the reign of Sultan ‘Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh of Bengal, (899-925 AH/AD 1493-1519). The first inscription i.e, the Kusumba Mosque inscription is dated the 13th Jamādi Awwal, the year 904 AH (27th December, 1498 A.D.)<sup>1</sup> (Karim, 1992: 245). The second inscription i.e; Mahisantosh Mosque inscription is dated the 9th day of the month of Ramadān, in the year 912 AH (23rd January, 1507 A.D.). (Karim, 1992: 283). The following paper tries to focus on the historical, socio-religious and cultural understanding of the region and the period on the basis of the epigraphic records on these pedestal inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> (Sattar, 2010)

In this context it may be mentioned that there are several sculptures (datable/undatable) belonging to Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina religious affiliation bearing an Arabic and Persian scripts reported from different ateliers of Bengal. The Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, Bangladesh has in its collection five inscribed images of this class. (Rahman, 1998). The purport of such epigraphic record is to serve as an official epigraphs which recounts the construction of mosques, tomb (*dargāh*), *siqāya* (shed for supplying drinking water), excavation of a tank, erection of a gateway to a mosque, erection of a gateway to a fort, etc. The compositions of few epigraphs are distinct from the general official epigraphs.<sup>3</sup> (Bhattacharya, 1995: 25-9 & Sattar, 2010). Further the text of the inscription on mosques and tombs invariably begin with quotations from *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (sayings of the prophet Mohammad) followed by the main text which most often ends by recording the name of the builder or the composer of the text, the name of reigning Sultan, and other cognate information. This appeal of the meritorious nature of the work supported by quotations from *Hadith* and *Qur'an* are supported to have served as incentives to many pious Muslim, to build a mosque. The two mosque inscriptions which are the subject of discussion in this paper and dated to the reign of Sultan ‘Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh of Bengal, (899-925 AH/AD 1493-1519) belongs to the category of an official epigraphs.<sup>4</sup> (Karim, 1992: 235-326).

I

**Kusumba Mosque Inscription of Sultan Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh of Bengal**

The inscription was first discovered by Mr. Surendramohán Chaudhury in a village near Kusumba, an ancient ruined locality, under Nowgaon sub-division, Bangladesh. (Ahmed, 1960:155). The epigraph is now preserved in Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi under Accession number 2446. The massive block of basalt measuring 62 X 26.5 cm bearing the inscription on the reverse once formed the pedestal part of a Viṣṇu image according to Muklesur Rahman. (Rahman, 1998:93). Since the photograph of the inscribed pedestal is not at our disposal it is difficult to make an iconographical analysis of the specimen. We therefore give below the iconographic description as stated by Rahman in his catalogue. (Rahman, 1998: 93). The sculpture is badly damaged. The *suptaratha* pedestal shows at its centre the stalk of the *viśvapadma* between the pair of rosettes. The remaining portion of the lotus seat bears the feet of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on the either side of the *pudmapīṭha* of Viṣṇu. At the extreme right but on the same plane, are the feet of one of the *āyudhapuruṣas* on a lotus, while at the opposite end, a lotus footrest has survived. The figure of Viṣṇu *vāhāna* i.e. Garuda appears in kneeling posture to the left of the pedestal. To further left and extreme right the pedestal is carved with rosettes, now mutilated, one at each end. Rahman dates the pedestal to C. 12th century A.D.

Besides the iconographic description of the pedestal concerned, the epigraphic record engraved at the reverse draws keen attention. The language is Arabic and the script is *Naskh* of a heavy type. (Ahmed, 1960:155 & Karim, 1992:244). We give below the text and translation of this dated epigraphic record.

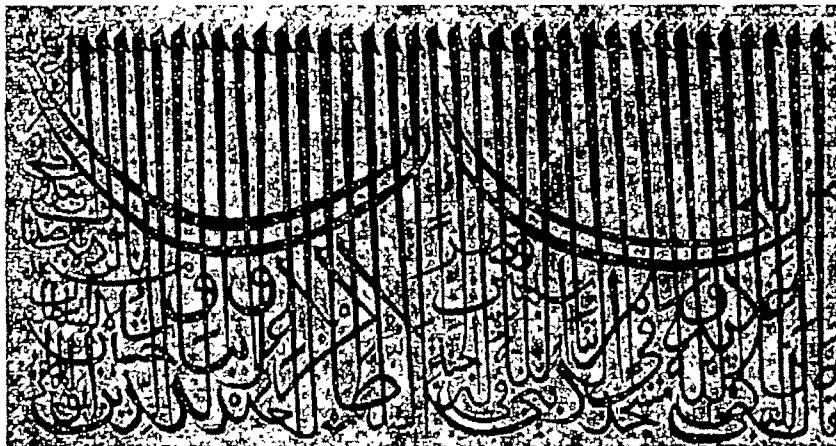


Plate I: Kusumba Mosque Inscription of Sultān Alauddin Husain Shah

Photo courtesy: Enamul Haque, *Islamic Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, pl. 90

**Reading 1:** Shamsuddin Ahmed “*Inscriptions of Bengal*”, Varendra Research Museum, 1960, Vol. IV, p. 155-6, No. VII

**Text:**

Line 1

*Qālan nabiyo sallalāho alehe wasallam-man banā masjidan fiddunya banallāho ta'āla sab'iена qaṣran fi'ljannah-banā hadha al-masjid sultānu 'aṣre wazzamān-khalifat 'ullāhe b'ilhujjat w'alburhān as' Sultān*

Line 2

*Ad dunyā-wad-dīn Abū'l Muzzaffar Husain Shāh Sultān-Khuldullāhe mulkuhu wa sultanuhu-bani-khair sammuhu Ramandaula ibne kisāmi-sallamahu ta'āla fiddarain-mutawarrikhan filthalithe wal ahsre min jamadil awwal-sanata arbā 'wa tisa 'mia 904 A.H.*

**Translation:**

The Prophet, blessing and peace of Allah be poured on him, has said, “Whoever builds a mosque in this world, Allah the Great will build seventy palaces (for him) in heaven”.

This mosque was built by (during the reign of ) the sultan of the time and age, viceregent of Allah with proof and deed, Sultan' Alaud-Dunya wad-Din Abul Muzaffar Husain Shah Sultan, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and majesty; the name of the founder of this benevolent structure is Ramandaula, son of Kinapati, may Allah the Great keep him in peace in both worlds; dated the 13th Jumada I, in the year nine hundred and four: 904 A.H. (30th December, 1498 A.C.)

**Reading 2:** Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dhaka, 1992, pp. 244-5, Reference No. 9: 101, text plate 38 (b)

**Text:**

Line 1

*Qālan nabiyo sallalāho alehe wa sallam-man banā masjidan fiddunya banallāho ta'āla sab'iена qaṣran fi'ljannah-banā hadha al-masjid sultānu aṣre wazzamān-khalifat'ullāhe b'ilhujjat W'alburhān as' sultān Alau*

Line 2

*Ad-dunyā wad-dīn Abū'l Muzzaffar Husain Shāh Sultān-Khuldullāhe mulkuhu wa sultanuhu-bani-khair sammuhu Rāmandlah ibne kisāmi-sallamahu ta'āla fiddarain-muwarrikha filthalithe wal ishrīn jamadil awwal-sanata arbā 'wa tisa'mia 904 A.H.*

**Translation:**

Line 1

The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has said, “He who builds a mosque

## A Note on the Mosque Inscriptions on a Pedestal of a Bengal Sultan

in the world, Allah the Most High will build seventy palaces in Paradise.” This mosque was built (during the reign of) the Sultan of the time and age, The Khalīfah of Allah by proof and testimony, Sultān ‘Alā

Line 2

Al- dunya wa’l -dīn Abūl Muzaffar Ḥusain Shāh, Sultān, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty. The name of the builder of this benevolent structure is Rāmandlah’, son of Kisāmī, may Allah the Great keep him safe in both the worlds. Dated the 23rd *Jamādīl*, the year 904 A.H. (27th December, 1498 A.D.).

On the basis of the text and translations of the Kusumba mosque inscription as stated above we may now highlight the significance of this epigraphic record in the context of its discovery from the region concerned and its implication in understanding the socio-religious and cultural contour of the period.

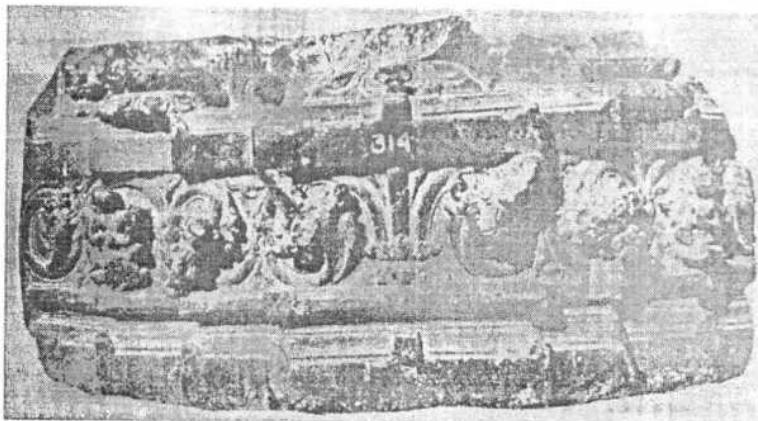
The inscription from Kusumba is dated to 13th Jamadī Awwal in the year 904 AH. It records the erection of a mosque by Ramandaula<sup>5</sup>/Ramandlah<sup>6</sup> who was a son of Kinapati /Kisāmī<sup>7</sup> during the reign of Sultān ‘Alā al-dīn Ḥusain Shāh (899-925 AH/AD 1493-1519). It appears that the record is dated to the fifth year of the Sultān: The inscription opens with the oft-repeated quotation from the *Hadith* relevant for inscriptions stating building of mosques i.e. *Qālan nabiyo sallalāho alehe wa sallam-man banā masjidan fiddunya banallāho ta’āla sab’iena qaṣran fi’ljannah-banā hadha al-masjid sultānu aşre wazzamān-khalifat’ullāhe b’ihujat w’alburhān* translated as “The Prophet, blessing and peace of Allah be poured on him, has said, “Whoever builds a mosque in this world, Allah the Great will build seventy palaces (for him) in heaven”. The inscription is significant from the historical, socio-religious and cultural point of view. The discovery of the record from Kusumba in the Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh i.e. Northern Bangladesh is a pointer to the fact that Sultān ‘Alā al-dīn Ḥusain Shāh consolidated the hold of the Sultānate over the territory of Northern Bangladesh. The erection of mosque is considered to be a pious work of any Muslim and the Holy *Qurā’n* records the merit of making a pious gift for such sacred work. From this inscription we learn that Ramandaula, the son of Kisāmī<sup>8</sup> was the builder of the religious edifice in the year 904 AH on the day of 13th Jamadī Awwal. Mosques were built mostly at the initiatives of the Sultans or their officers. The Muslim epigraphs often records the name of the builder of the mosque having the epithet of *Majlis ul-Majālis* or Malik indicating that the person held the position of a nobleman or an office in the state. The absence of this title in connection to the name of the builder Ramandaula suggests that he was neither a nobleman nor he held an office in the Sultanate. Jumādā Awwal (Jumādā al-Ūla) is the fifth month of Islamic calendar and is considered to be “the first month of parched land” which corresponds to Islamic Summer.<sup>9</sup> Thus Ramandaula consecrated the pious work on the 13th day of the month of Jamadī Awwal. The importance of the thirteenth day of the month of Jamadī Awwal is not known to us.

The epigraph tablet from Kusumba with a two line inscription on the reverse and the iconographical features of Viṣṇu images in the obverse evidently suggest that a fragmented portion of a Viṣṇu image dated to 12th century was later used as a stone slab by the Muslims to construct their religious edifice i.e the well known Kusumba Mosque. The stone slab was affixed to the Kusumba Mosque which was found in a ruined state.

## II

### **Mahisantosh Mosque inscription of Sultan Alā al-dīn Ḥusain Shāh of Bengal**

This inscription was discovered at the time of excavating a ruined mosque at Mahisantosh, and was presented to the Varendra Research Society by Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray. The epigraph is now preserved in Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi under Accession number No. 314. The inscribed tablet once formed the part of a Viṣṇu image. (Sanyal, 1928: 18 & Rahman, 1998: 64, pl. 82)



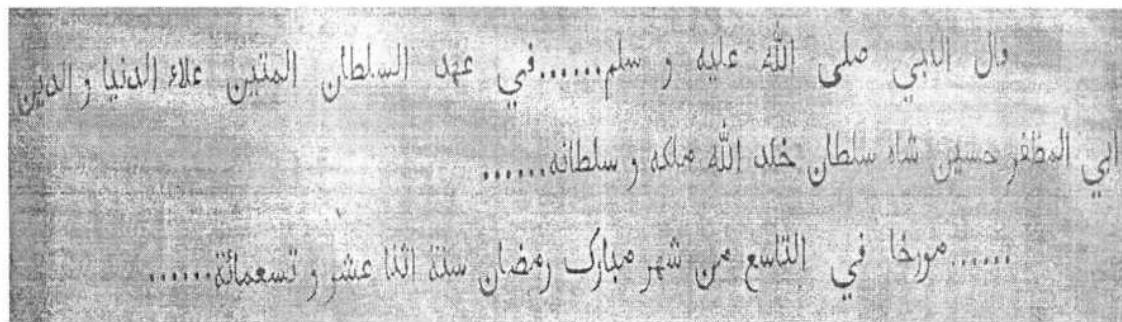
Pl. 2: Pedestal of a Viṣṇu image, Mahisantosh

Photo Courtesy: Muklesur Rahman, *Sculpture in the Varendra Research Museum. A Descriptive Catalogue*, Varendra Research Museum, pl. 82

We may now take into account the stylistic and iconoplasic contribution of this fragmented sculpture in the development of early medieval and medieval art of Bengal. The mutilated inscribed (Arabic inscription on the reverse) pedestal is a part of a Viṣṇu image as envisaged from the presence of Garuḍa to the left end of the huge pedestal. The massive block of basalt measures 48.3 X 24.1 cm. It is executed in high relief. The high raised pedestal is of the *saptaratha* type and decorated intricately with lotus scrolls. The figure of a worshipper is shown to the right end. Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu in *anjalihastu* is shown seated to left. At the back of Garuḍa is seated perhaps a devotee. The upper part of

the fragmented pedestal bears a portion of *Viśvapadma* of the central deity i.e. Viṣṇu and his consorts. On stylistic ground we may date the pedestal to c. 11 th century A.D.

The epigraphic record engraved at the reverse of the pedestal is of immense significance. The language of the two lined inscription is Arabic and the script is *Naskh* of a crude nature. (Ahmed, 1960:179, No. XXVIII). We give below the text and translation of this dated epigraphic record.



Pl.3: Inscription at the back of the pedestal of a Viṣṇu image, Mahisantosh  
Photo Courtesy: S. Sharf-ud-din *Annual Report of Varendra Research Society*, 1927-28, p.7

**Reading 1:** Sharafud-Din, *Annual Report of Varendra Research Society* 1927-28, pp. 1-2, text of the inscription is given in p. 7. The missing words in line 1 and line 2 are explained separately by the scholar. We therefore give below the complete text of the inscription.

#### Text:

Line 1

*Qālan al nabi sallalāho alehe wa sallam man banā masjid an lillahi banā llāhu lahu bayt an fi'l-jannati fi ahde al-Sultān al-matin Alāud-dunyā wad-din Abū'l Muzzaffar Husain Shāh Sultān-Khuldullāhe mulkuhu wa sultānuha ... ... ...*

Line 2

*... ... ... murkha fi al-tase min shahre mubārak Ramdān sanata isna' ashur wa tis' 'a mia*

#### Translation:

Line 1.

The Prophet—may God grant him peace and blessings—has said ... ... ... At the time of the powerful ruler Alā-ud-dunia-wa-uddin Abul Muzzaffar Husain Shah Sultan—may God perpetuate his kingdom and authority ... ... ...

Line 2

..... Dated the ninth day of the auspicious month of Ramzan of the year 912.

**Reading 2:** Shamsuddin Ahmed ‘‘*Inscriptions of Bengal*’’, Varendra Research Museum, 1960, vol. IV, p. 179

**Text:**

Line 1

*Qālan nabiyo sallalāho alehe wasallam-man banā al masjida banallāho ta'āla sab'iēna qasran fi'ljannah ... ... .... as Sultānu salātin Alaud-dunyā wad-din Abū'l Muzzaffar Husain Shāh Sultān-Khuldullāhe mulkuhu wa sultānu*

Line 2

*banā hadha al masjid .... ... ... bin Suhail muwarrikhan fitāsi min shahre mubārak Ramdān sanata isna ashara wa tisa'mia an'nabi*

**Translation:**

The Prophet, may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him, has said, “Whoever builds a mosque, Allah the Most High builds seventy castles for him in Paradise.” (Built) in the reign of the sultan of sultans,’ Alaud-Dunya wad—Din Abul Muzaffar Husain Shah, sultan, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and authority. This mosque was built by ... ... ... son of Suhail, dated in the 9th day of the blessed month of Ramadan, in the year nine hundred and twelve, 912 A.H. (corresponding to 26th February, 1507 A.C.)

**Reading 3:** Abdul Karim, *Corpus of The Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dhaka, 1992: 282-3.

**Text:**

Line 1

*Qālan nabiyo sallalāho alehe wa sallam-man banā al masjida banallāho ta'āla si lahu qasran fi'ljannata ... as Sultānu salātin Alaud-dunyā wad-din Abū'l Muzzaffar Husain Shāh Sultān-Khuldullāhe mulkuhu wa sultānu*

Line 2

*banā hadha al masjid ... bin Suhail muwarrikhan fitāsi min shahre mubārak Ramdān sanata isna ashre wa tisa'mia an'nabi*

**Translation:**

Line 1

The Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has said, “He who builds a mosque, the Almighty Allah will build for him a palace in Paradise.” ... . Sultan of Sultans,’ Alā al-dunyā wa’ I-din Abū’ I Muzaffar Husain Shah, Sultan, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty.

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Line 2

This mosque was built by ... son of Suhail, dated the 9th day of the blessed month of Ramadān, in the year 912 A.H. (23rd January, 1507 A.D.)

The epigraph tablet was unearthed from the ruined vestiges of Mahisantosh Mosque during an excavation conducted by the Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. It is assumed therefore, that the inscription on the pedestal of a Viṣṇu sculpture was used as a stone block in much later period by the Muslims to construct the Mahisantosh Mosque. The stone slab was affixed to the Mahisantosh Mosque which was found in a ruined state.

The epigraphic composition of Mahisantosh Mosque inscription is similar to the Kusumba Mosque inscription. The purport of this official epigraph is to record the construction of a mosque by a son of Suhail and is dated to the 9th day of the blessed month of Ramadān, in the year 912 A.H. This pious work was undertaken during the reign of Sultān of Sultāns 'Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh (899 - 925 AH/AD 1493-1519). It appears from the dated record that the mosque was erected in the thirteenth regnal year of the reigning Sultān. It opens with the *hadith*/religious formulae found in a considerable variety of forms on the mosque of that period indicating the rewards that await one in the next world for founding such religious institutions. The discovery of the inscription from Mahisantosh once again proves the hegemony of Sultāns 'Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh in this region i.e. Northern Bangladesh. We may add in this connection that Mahisantosh as an archaeological site has remained potential since the days of Pāla-Sena period (the discovery of Mahisantosh Sūrya Image Inscription dated to the regnal year 9 of Mahendrapāla, the Pāla king , 847-862 A.D). Besides the historical value of this inscription, its socio-religious and cultural implications cannot be overlooked. The religious edifice was erected by a son of Suhail as mentioned in the inscription. It is evident that the son whose name has not been mentioned in the record was supported by his father to perform this religious duty. Unlike Ramandaula, the builder of Kusumba Mosque, the son of Suhail who is credited with the erection of Mahisantosh mosque did not belong to the high official status as the epithet *Majlis ul-Majālis* is conspicuous by its absence. Secondly the inscription is dated to the most venerated month of Islamic Calendar i.e. 9th day of the month of Ramadān. Ramadān or Ramzan is the ninth month of Islamic calendar. (C.E. Bosworth, et al 1995)

The thirty days of fasting in this Holy month has its own significance. The builder of the Mosque i.e the son of Suhail for the sake of acquiring rewards from Allah for the pious deed devoted his religious work to the first ten days of benevolence of the Holy month of Ramzān.

The two mosque inscriptions as discussed above are dated to the reign of Sultāns 'Alā al-dīn Husain Shāh, unquestionably one of the best Sultān of Bengal in the medieval period. It was under whose enlightened rule and patronage the creative genius of the Bengali people

reached its zenith. It was a period of great military conquests, peace and prosperity and unparalleled architectural activity as known from his contribution towards the establishment of welfare institutions like mosques, madrasa, bridges, wells for drinking water, *langatkhānas* for the benefit of poor and destitutes, etc. Besides keeping strong the Muslim ascendancy in Bengal, the Sultāns were also responsible to contribute and promote to the growth of the Muslim culture. Mosque, a place of religious sanctity where the Muslim offers congregational prayers to the Allah was the nervous centre of the Muslim society and the basic root of Muslim culture. (Karim, 1959: 39-61). The Sultān or their officers thus erected mosques not only for mere pomp and grandeur but also in full realization of their performance of a religious duty. It was true that the erection or construction of mosques was a sacred contribution of a Muslim person that would bring him in return the reward and blessings from the Almighty, the Allah.

The conclusion from the above discussion could be based on the following assumption. Discovery of two epigraph tablet from the ruinous mosques i.e Kusumba Mosque and Mahisantosh Mosque were used as stone slab by the people of Islamic faith for fulfilling their purpose of mosque construction. The stone slabs were used in such a manner as to be hidden from being viewed. Scholars like Catherine B. Asher and David J. Mc Cutchion are of the opinion that the stones of temples were taken to build the mosques. (Mc Cutchion, 1972: 12-3). It is therefore admitted that the reuse of architectural and sculptural members for the construction of religious edifices (Mosque, Madrasa, *Dargāh*, etc) of Islamic faith was a common practice. However, can we look into the possibility of an alternative interpretation that the builders of these mosques were using materials from Hindu sculptures intentionally to promote the idea of fraternity and universal brotherhood preached by Islam?

## Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Sutapa Sinha, Head & Associate Professor, Dept.of Islamic History & Culture, University of Calcutta for kindly drawing my attention to this publication. The inscription is dated to 13th Jamadī Awwal according to the reading of the text by the author. But the translation of the inscription mentions the date as 23rd Jamādī I, the year 904 AH.
- 2 An earlier attempt in this context has been made by the author.
- 3 The epigraphic record begins with the quotations from *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (sayings of the prophet Mohammad) like the *Sūra Tauba* (Repentance). The inscription on the Tara image records the *Darul sharif*. Few inscriptions simply pray to Allah for the long life of the king.
- 4 Of the seventy-seven inscriptions dated to the reign of 'Alā al-dīn Ḥusain Shāh of Bengal, forty-six refers to the pious work of erection of mosques. The rest thirty-one recounts the erection of tombs, madrasa, *siqayah*.
- 5 According to the reading of Shamsud-Din Ahmed, see text 1

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- 6 According to the reading of Abdul Karim, see text 2
- 7 *Kinapati* and *Kisāmi* are two variant reading as mentioned by Shamsud-Din Ahmed and Abdul Karim as the father of *Ramandaulah*. But the correct reading is *Kisāmi* and not *Kinapati*.
- 8 The names of both father and son are unconventional.
- 9 *Source*, Wikipedia, the free Encyclopaedia.

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# **Interpreting Heritage: Ajanta in Historical Imagination**

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Writing about heritage, one would argue, demands a more sensitive appreciation of multiple visions about the past, not always amenable to the disciplinary canons of scientific history. Heritage is created by the diverse and often contradictory modes of remembering the past, frequently outgrowing the bindings of historical evidence. While the methods of scientific historical enquiry insist on unqualified allegiance to the rules of evidence, heritage promises to be a much larger territory without strictly demarcated boundaries. It is in this context that the function of history as a constituent of heritage creates an interest in what is often celebrated as the ‘freedom of memory.’ Such concerns about heritage are frequently reflected in the travel literature, an important literary site, among others, for the free play of competing visions about what is defined as heritage. If archaeological explorations created heritage sites by giving them an aura of antiquity, the travel writings disseminated information about them to the wider reading public, allowing curious men to engage with the past in ways that often defied the standard disciplinary conventions of history writing. The numerous travel writings which featured in the periodical literature in Bengal in the early part of the twentieth century regularly tried to foreground many archaeological sites which Indian archaeology was then exploring. But in many instances the archaeological description of a place was blended with legends and myths which the local people considered to be an inescapable feature of *Sthanmahatmya* implying a greatness derived quite substantially from legendary history. Legends which the residents of a town or a locality associated with the historical relics surrounding them constituted aspects of ‘alternative histories’, something which is difficult to comprehend within the limited domain of scientific history.<sup>1</sup> (Aquil and Chatterjee, 2010)

Heritage, in addition, is also tied with the culture of tourism which in modern times came to add a new gloss on the age old practice of pilgrimage. In the way the experiences of travel sought to bring into focus sites like Ajanta or Sanchi, they certainly became a major ingredient in promoting tourism. But tourism culture in such cases tried to come to terms with the questions surrounding the concept of heritage as well. At times, authors who had a far more scholarly engagement with history and archaeology wrote some of these travelogues, juxtaposing the historical and the archaeological dimensions of a place with the natural and cultural ambience in which these sites were located. In the process they created at one level the foundation of an important facet of tourism culture, which became linked with competing visions about heritage. Scholars like Akshay Kumar Maitreya, to cite an important example from a number of such authors in Bengal at the turn of the nineteenth century, dwelt upon such themes to call attention to the ancient relics

of Bengal.<sup>2</sup> The curiosity of the history minded intellectuals in Bengal who were introducing such historical sites to the reading public of Bengal also took them to distant places beyond the limits of the province. They delved into the archaeological history of the places they wished to foreground, using at the same time the myths and legends associated with the place to establish its importance.<sup>3</sup> The need to establish *Sthanmahatmya* required forays into the world of legends as well. Yet, when heritage is defined in a more scholarly fashion, history, iconography and archaeology emerge as its important foundations coexisting with other facets of cultural life.

## II

Arguably, the few examples of a particular genre of travel writings which we have cited, had an important function in the creation of heritage sites; yet, the development of archeological knowledge during the latter half of the nineteenth century, always remained an important basis for such popular writings. Ajanta, with which this essay is primarily concerned, went through a similar creational experience, shaped as it was by the archaeological discovery of the site. As Indian archaeology in the late nineteenth century was laying bare the archaeological treasures of Ajanta, an art historian like Ordhendra Coomer Ganguly (O. C. Ganguly) had reasons to feel tempted to visit the site, braving the hazards that the guidebook written by Murray had cautioned him about. On his return the piece 'Ajanta Guhay Dui Din' (Two days at the Ajanta caves) that he wrote for *Pravasi* was at the same time a tourism piece laced adequately with scholarly judgements on the importance of the Ajanta paintings in the history of the Indian art. (Ganguly, 1904-05) At the time when Ganguly had visited the place it did not have a direct rail link except for the line operated by the Nizam State Railways. The nearest rail station was Pachora that was thirty-six miles away from Ajanta. It took them two days to travel this distance by a cattle carriage making its way through muddy roads. The night was spent in a police outpost at Sindurni, halfway between Pochera and Ajanta. The author was not even aware that there was a pucca road from Jalgaon—now a major railhead and a sprawling city, which at that time was only a sleepy village, that had been taken by Lord Curzon during his visit to Ajanta in 1899. The bungalow of Captain Gill, the man who had made the initial contribution to the popularization of Ajanta through his famous *Illustrations of the Architecture of Western India*, at Fardapur, was by then a rest house that the travellers were using. The narrative of the journey terminates with a fascinating description of the nature surrounding the caves, actually rejoicing over the fact that the difficult terrain ensured the protection of the site from its destruction by human beings, especially the iconoclasts.

Ganguly's essay is easily comparable to a similar piece written by Hemendra Kumar Ray on the caves of Karle, located not far from Ajanta. Ray's essay offered a kind of photographic account of the monuments and sculptures. (Ray, 1910-11) But Ganguly's piece was somewhat different. When Ganguly introduced the Ajanta caves to his readers the

narrative ceased to be a pure travel description and emerged as a reflective account of the religious and artistic history of the place. He went on explaining how the caves were built in different stages and how they help us to understand the history of the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. He felt that a proper appreciation of the paintings required elaborate knowledge of texts in which the principles of Buddhism and Buddhist iconography had been spelt out. This was one reason why he felt that the album published by James Burgess, though important, had suffered from a few inadequacies. Besides emphasizing the need to establish some kind of correspondence between the textual and the archaeological which by then at any rate had become an important concern among Indian historians, Ganguly was keen to use the frescoes as lessons for Indian artists as well, maintaining that the caves created the feeling of how the artistic achievements of the ancient painters had established the greatness of Indian art, no less remarkable than the art of ancient Greece. The paintings, in Ganguly's opinion paralleled the excellence of classical Sanskrit literature defining the lingua Franca of Indian art. In addition the essential Indianness of these paintings deserved appreciation, by drawing away the cultural dominance of European art traditions among Indian artists. It was by emulating the style of Ajanta that the Indian artists were expected to create a perfectly Indian art. Ganguly's objective behind writing this piece was to establish the site of Ajanta as a new pilgrimage center for educated Indians and as the travel account slowly merged into a programmatic statement about Indian art it created a different kind of writing in which the visions of the artist, inspired by nationalism sought sustenance from visions of the past created by the visit to the archaeological site.

Ganguly's essay on Ajanta was certainly one of the many such travel writings on Ajanta. Its narrative style was certainly distinct from several other pieces, published around the same time, which concentrated more on the artistic heritage without offering however the travellers menu that Ganguly's essay carried.<sup>4</sup> Together, these accounts promoted sites like Ajanta as centers of cultural pilgrimage. The way O. C. Ganguly wrote his impressions about Ajanta, revealed how with the development of archaeological knowledge, apparently innocuous travel literature became a part of historical discourses. With regard to Ajanta, the series of albums on Ajanta frescoes, invariably drawing on archaeological discourses over the place's antiquity and cultural significance, certainly contributed to a more acute sense of awareness about the place. The archaeological reconstruction of the site remained a fitting prelude to a more wide-spread exploration of the place by travellers and connoisseurs. The archaeology of Ajanta in turn, became connected with the way scholars like James Fergusson and Rajendra Lal Mitra fought bitterly over the antiquity of the place, or indeed with the manner in which a man like Golam Yazdani, who had been trained by Sir John Marshall, managed to impart into his popular multi-volume photographic album on Ajanta frescoes, knowledge based on a more aesthetic understanding of Indian paintings. (Yazdani,

1930-52) All this underlines the argument that heritage has many layers, subject to the manifold choices made by the people in defining it. It is therefore worthwhile to explore how our knowledge about Ajanta's heritage has been shaped by varied dimensions of its making as an archaeological site. There is indeed a point where scientific archaeology and culturally and perhaps emotionally structured notions of heritage converged to produce images with which we associate the heritage of the place.

### III

Ajanta, situated in the Indhyadri or Ajanta range of hills, in the words of James Burgess, the amateur archaeologist, who in association with James Fergusson, made one of the initial explorations in the site, had 'the perfect seclusion of the wild ravine with its lofty walls of rocks, to attract the devotees of Buddhism, perhaps nineteen centuries ago or more, as a fitting solitude in which to form a retreat from the distracting cares of an over-busy soul contaminating world.' (Burgess, 1868:11) What impressed Burgess as a deserted retreat for the Bhikshus to pursue knowledge and *nirbritti* by practicing contemplation and self-restraint became for later historians like Walter M. Spink and M. K. Dhavalikar, among many others, a site of religious patronage by local rulers. In Spink's opinion, Ajanta caves reached their height of glory during the heyday of the Vakataka Empire, to be plunged into darkness by the early sixth century when the empire had collapsed. (Spink, 1992; Dhavalikar, 1968:147-153) Once Ajanta came out of darkness that descended on it after the collapse of the Vakataka rule in the region, it became as much a connoisseur's delight as it was a source of iconographer's wisdom. Over time, however, researches drew attention away from the artistic dimension to the way Ajanta as a Buddhist site received the patronage of the local rulers and wealthy and powerful men. For historians of religion the caves represented the resilience of Buddhism in India even after its popularity was somewhat undermined by the emergence of Brahminical cults under the patronage of the Gupta rulers. In many of the regional kingdoms of the Deccan it continued to attract a popular following patronizing the Buddhist artistic creations of the kind that one finds in Ajanta. (Hazra, 1984) For historians to reflect on such complex issues associated with buildings, temples and other pieces of architecture, the archaeological discovery of the site always remained the crucial foundational work. Who were the earliest visitors among modern men to see the caves? How the information that he passed on to others attracted scholars and visitors? What contribution that these early explorations made to scholarly discussions of the site's antiquity and significance in understanding the ancient foundations of the Indian culture?

M. K. Dhavalikar's essay on the inscriptions of Ajanta mentions an unusually modern inscription in cave I, which recorded the name of one of the earliest visitors to the caves that had remained hidden behind the forests for more than a thousand years. (Dhavalikar, 1968: 147) Robert Smith, an officer of the Bombay army, visited the site on his way back

from the battle field of Assaye in Khandesh where the British had inflicted the final blow on the Maratha Empire. Escorted by the local Bhils who used to describe these caves by using local honorifics, Smith visited the spot and inscribed his name on one of the walls of the cave. In the following decades the awareness about the Ajanta caves as an important archaeological site among the British officials came as a consequence of the prevailing nineteenth century orientalist interest in ancient Indian culture and religion. Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti refers to the Bombay transactions of the early 1820s in which notices were written about some of the important Buddhist remains spread all over the subcontinent. Some of the earliest references to the Buddhist and Hindu caves of Western India in places like Karle, Nasik, Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad featured in these volumes. A report of this kind, written by William Erskine, mentions how excavations were conducted around this time at the top and bottom of the Ajanta pass. It was difficult to approach this place and very few ventured to reach the hilltop with the exception of a few military officers of the Madras army. Located at the meeting point of Khandesh and Berar in what was then the native state of Hyderabad, it belonged to the Nizam's territory. Consequently, the Company's Government did not have any direct interest in the antiquities of the region. Another account by a military officer namely J. E. Alexander in 1830 talks about excavations in an otherwise unapproachable place. The report also found the paintings 'well preserved and highly coloured and exhibiting in glowing tints of which light red is the most common', depicting features of the 'natives of India perhaps two thousand or two thousand five hundred years ago' besides the Buddhist deities. (Chakrabarti, 1988: 24-27)

The man who actually made a seminal contribution to the reemergence of the Ajanta caves as a cultural site was James Burgess. An architect by profession, Burgess collaborated with Fergusson in producing the monumental work, *Cave Temples in India* in 1880. Burgess was also appointed as the archaeological surveyor and reporter in what was known then as the Archaeological Survey of western India. Before holding this appointment since January 1874, Burgess worked as the Principal of the Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Bombay. Acquiring a taste for Indian art, Burgess was keen to explore Ajanta's art treasures despite the reluctance of the Indian government to allow excavation of a site belonging to the Nizam's territory by the Archaeological Survey. (Singh, 2004:190) While Fergusson was greatly interested in the more technical dimensions of the art and architecture of Ajanta, Burgess' was mainly an artist's view of the place. His ideas about Ajanta had already been expressed in the booklet that he had published earlier in 1868 with a view to making Ajanta an important tourist site for European visitors. It is instructive that Burgess' detailed accounts of the Ajanta caves in this little volume were prefated by a fairly long introduction emphasizing how the place had by then become so accessible that the knowledgeable visitors would only ignore it at their peril. A graphic description of the railway connection forms an important part of the narrative of a trip to Ajanta, Aurangabad and Ellora. Burgess and

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Fergusson had a fruitful collaboration, spanning several decades of research in unraveling the artistic and architectural elegance of the Ajanta caves for the international readership. Yet, this early account which may be classified as a kind of a travel brochure contains a considerable amount of academic profundity born out of long years of experience in studying cave architecture in India. In tune with the requirement of a travel brochure, Burgess' almost photographic description of the caves formed an important part of his attempt to connect Ajanta with equally important historical sites in Aurangabad and at Ellora, perhaps to tell his readers that this was one contiguous region in western India which was waiting for them to be explored by taking advantage of the railway connections which had by then made it easier for the visitors to approach the hitherto inaccessible sites from Bombay. The travel brochure however possessed a large variety of information about how since 1819, thanks to the movement of troops through an ancient commercial highway touching the foothills of Ajanta, the isolation of Ajanta had been somewhat broken. To the extent that Burgess' otherwise simple account strayed into the history of how in different stages from the 1830s onwards, the place had come under the scanner of the archaeologists and the connoisseurs, it acquired the character of a treatise on archaeology as well. Partly because of his close association with Fergusson, Burgess was in a position to correct the inaccuracies of some of the earlier descriptions of the place.<sup>5</sup> Burgess considered most of these early accounts as unsatisfactory for their lack of understanding of both Buddhism and the architectural principles which went into the making of these Buddhist shrines. The only exception was Major Robert Gill's beautiful illustrations of the rock temples and architecture in western India on which both Fergusson and Burgess relied for their initial exploration. Among the early visitors Major Gill remained a more informed observer largely because of his long stay at the foothills of Ajanta. (Burgess, 1868:51-55)

Burgess himself made a few visits to the caves and almost by way of continuing Robert Gill's earlier venture, published a series of works which, owing to Burgess' main preoccupation with Ajanta's art works, carried the description of each of these caves with minutest possible details. To some extent such details as he was able to record from his intimate study of the paintings and architecture, provided James Fergusson with the necessary raw materials for the latter to speculate on the history of the caves. By the time their collaborative work on the Ajanta caves was published, the site had lost its earlier seclusion. The arrival of new visitors, as Burgess notes in the travel brochure or as Henry Couseans would recount his experiences of the site during the 1880s in a long note on Ajanta's archaeology in 1905, began to take its toll on the paintings. Some of these have already been destroyed by the fire that the latter day ascetics and mendicants lit while they found shelter in these caves. The modern visitor, aware of the antique value of these works, often cut them loose from the wall. It was in the fitness of things that Burgess, as if to anticipate the conservationism of later archaeologists like John Marshall, insisted on the

adoption of appropriate methods for the conservation of the caves. Realizing that this might remain a pious wish, not to be realized due to the general indifference about archaeological conservation by the Nizam's state, he planned to make careful and faithful drawings of each of the caves, which was to remain as a document of the artistic marvels of India's antiquity, even if nature and human interventions obliterated them wholly from the face of the earth.

Burgess' descriptive methodology adequately fulfilled his purposes. Apart from the description, the account contained insightful comments which the specialist of the later years profitably used for a more elaborate assessment of Ajanta in Indian cultural history. He was perhaps one of the earliest narrators to call attention to the connection of the Ajanta paintings and sculptures with the evolution of Buddhist theology arguing that the earliest austere caves, devoid of any iconographical representation of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, was hewn by a community of monks who practiced Theravada. In addition, Burgess had important suggestions to offer regarding the building styles which as far as Fergusson was concerned, enlightened the pathways to the many lives of the Ajanta caves in terms of stylistic evolution. The stylistic evolution of the caves grafting into the columns, the porches and the sanctum, the figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, demonstrated the gradual triumph of Mahayana Buddhism. These were aesthetic productions of the time when Buddhism made its transition from 'wisdom to faith' with devotion and iconography emerging as indelible elements in the devotee's religious visions. The fact that some of the caves which were usually more ornamented than the earlier austere ones, sported deities from the Brahminical pantheon, only pointed to their later excavations. All of these comments implied a deeper historical understanding that a more informed scholar like Fergusson put to use in analyzing the long term historical evolution of the caves at Ajanta from a stylistic point of view. Without being able to read the implication of his statement, Burgess was describing the long drawn religious process by which the local Bhil population converted some of the sculptures into their own, often giving them names which had nothing to do with the original provenance of the paintings and sculptures. A Bodhisattva Maitreya figure was described by the Bhils as Jangalanātha and another was addressed as Matsyanātha. Such information certainly came in passing as a matter of course that one would ordinarily expect in a faithful descriptive account. But once Ajanta began to emerge as a site on which competing historical arguments about its origin and evolution ran against one another, what was essentially descriptive was gradually eclipsed by more interpretative judgements about its history. Ajanta was becoming important not merely for aesthetic reasons, nor in the way an artist like O. C. Ganguly venerated it as a centre of cultural pilgrimage for Indian artists; the site touched on a debate on how it all began and how long it continued, in the process raising important questions of patronage long before the historians of art made it a major issue in art history. In underlining the chronology of

the Ajanta caves Burgess more or less followed the lead of Fergusson. The methods that he had employed to arrive at a rough understanding of the age of the Ajanta caves to a large extent anticipated the comparative methods that later historians had followed by comparing the architectural styles of the caves as well as the main features of the sculptures and paintings with similar extant remains elsewhere in India, Burgess settled for a time zone between the First and Seventh century A. D. The long chronology that he suggested followed similar points made by Fergusson. Echoing Fergusson he spotted in cave 11 the earliest examples of the introduction of pillars in the viharas. But at one point he expressed his preference for what in some modern writings is labeled as a 'Short Chronology'. (Schastok, 2000: 7-14) Unlike Fergusson who was not anxious to locate a time when Ajanta's art reached its height, Burgess by an unusual expression of disagreement with his mentor saw the fifth century as the high point from when Ajanta's culture began to go down hill.

#### **IV**

The transformation of Ajanta from a marvelous site worthy of elaborate descriptions to the one suffused with deeper historical structures and meanings, was celebrated in a major debate on Ajanta between James Fergusson and Rajendra Lal Mitra. The debate hinged on the proper methods that a historian was expected to follow in reading the antiquity of the site. The debate had in its backdrop the massive archaeological exploration of the ancient sites of India by the newly formed Archaeological Survey of India. Alexander Cunningham, interested as he was in the history of Buddhism, was instrumental in conducting early explorations into important Buddhist sites like Karle, Aurangabad in western India, Sanchi and Sarnath in central and northern India, affording the historians to fix the dates of these caves by making comparisons with the architectural and sculptural arts extant in other important centers of Buddhism. The other, a very distinct approach regarding dating, came to rely more on epigraphic evidence instead of making comparisons in style. Some of these issues which were raised in a bitter and acrimonious exchange between Fergusson and Mitra, remained relevant even in modern scholarship on Ajanta. If Fergusson locating the differences in the painting and architectural styles used in the caves of Ajanta, identified a difference of nearly a thousand years between the earliest and the latest ones, Rajendra Lal Mitra, using his skills in paleography, relied on the inscriptions to make out a case for a much shorter distance of time between the earliest and the latest caves. The simple question in the debate concerned the reliability of epigraphic knowledge as evidence in art history. Fergusson showing a good deal of aggression contested Mitra's argument that the provenance of inscriptions, paleographically analyzed, demonstrated a script predating the Gupta period. Fergusson on the other hand suggested that each of the caves might have been built in stages, acquiring over time architectural features that became popular in later times than the earlier period when an austere style was followed. Fergusson also suggested

that at least some of these caves were excavated at the last stages of cave architecture when the styles adopted within a cave were transposed into temples built in the open field. Style for Fergusson remained a critical yardstick by which one requires to determine the age of an architectural piece. (Mitra, 1880:126-139 and Fergusson, 1880:139-151)

The central issues in the extremely acrimonious debate between Fergusson and Rajendra Lal Mitra continued to inform modern historical discussions on the art and antiquity of Ajanta. A whole range of scholars have made their evaluation of how a site like Ajanta requires to be studied in terms of the evolution of Buddhist religious ideas and iconography. The use of the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas in the viharas and the chaityas in the Ajanta caves suggest a stage in the development of Buddhism in India associated with the triumph of Mahāyāna beliefs. Sheila L Weiner in an influential essay on 'Ajanta Iconography and Chronology' tried to establish the connection between iconographic changes and structural alterations in the architectural plans of the caves from around the third century A.D. That was the time when the chaityas seemed to have been relegated to a lesser position and the image began to take precedence over the stupas. Weiner, while conceding that each of the caves carried evidence of changes and new innovations over time, however argues that Ajanta appeared to be 'on the very threshold of Mahayana expression and may be the first major site of India proper where the threshold was visually crossed.' The Ajanta caves demonstrated visually the evolution of the chaitya halls, the gradual trend towards the preeminence of the Buddha image and the resultant architectural alteration in the forms of the viharas. The cave 19 in which a standing Buddha image was inscribed on the front of a stupa, seemed to have been an important turning point in the evolution of the Ajanta cave. The austerity of the earlier Hinayana cave was gradually replaced by a number of Vihara shrines dominated by colossal images of Buddha in Dharmachakramudra. Structurally the inclusion of a shrine within the vihara, intended usually as residential quarters of the Sramanas and the Bhiksus remained an important structural innovation, partly anticipated by similar features in the Gautamiputra Vihara at Nasik. Yet, it needs to be conceded that if the image was dominating, it was still coexisting with the stupas, by way of a form of compromise between the two different modes of Buddhist worship. From around the fifth century however the image of the Buddha in Dharmachakra mudra began to proliferate, whether at Ajanta or at Sarnath. It is argued by Weiner that the Buddha figures in the Ajanta caves seemed to be the first seated shrine images in India outgrowing at one stage the compromised form of the standing Buddha on the front of the stupa. Weiner also cites enough textual evidence to argue that such developments in Buddhist sculptural art were adequately reflected in the iconographic texts. (Weiner, 1976: 343-358) The concentration on the history of Buddhism as the main yardstick for judging the historical evolution of the Ajanta caves had precedents in similar ideas expressed by Golam Yazdani who in his famous multivolume work on Ajanta paintings

published between 1932 and 1952 had explained how the painting tradition had its beginning between the First century B.C. and First century A.D, flourished during the height of the Mahayana phase and declined from the sixth century with the rise of the Chalukya power.

If these discussions on Ajanta's evolution suggest a long chronology determined by the development of Buddhist religious practice, Walter Spink offered a short chronology focusing on a few decades in the later half of the fifth century when the sculptural and visual arts in Ajanta flourished due to the heavy patronage of the Vakataka rulers especially during the reign of the Vakataka emperor Harisena. He suggests that during this period Ajanta represented a 'burgeoning of pious activity' under the sponsorship of Harisena and the elite of his Empire, his ministers like Varahadeva and feudatories ruling over the Rishika region like Upendra Gupta. It was a period of scarcely more than a decade and a half followed by a period of disruption in patronage caused by the incursion of the Asmakas into the Rishika. The Asmakas who took over control over the region continued their patronage for a while even as they consciously introduced further innovation to register their distinctive presence by way of distancing themselves from the cultural practices of their predecessors. Spink succinctly makes this point when he writes that 'from the moment of the old site's reinvigoration by a consortium of the Emperor's richest and most powerful courtiers until its traumatic ending when some of these same founders were to be counted among the site's destroyers, the turbulence of Ajanta's development constantly leaves its revealing traces in the rock.'

Apart from identifying the temporal phases in the history of Ajanta, Spink's short chronology provided passageways to an understanding of the development of styles in architectures, sculptures and paintings by using both archaeological and textual sources. The apparent contradiction between inscriptions and iconographic styles that Fergusson had once suggested was resolved when Spink used the Vakataka inscriptions to locate the height of Ajanta's development as a center of Buddhist culture. His understanding of style was based on the comparisons that he made between Ajanta's frescoes and sculptures with the relics at Bagh, Aurangabad, Dharasiva and Ghatotkacha viharas, an argument which has a striking resemblance with the views of Yazdani on Ajanta's legacy in Indian cultural history. The images of Buddha, as usual offered the main empirical material on which Spink relied to identify the temporal stages. Images cut out in a new style suggested a temporal break as seated Buddha images backed by a stupa, a common feature in some of the earlier viharas and chaityas built roughly contemporaneously were replaced by colossal independent images standing out conspicuously at the center of the shrines. Some of the images, the sculpting of which were often abruptly suspended, at times of what Spink described as recession of patronage, were found embellished by throne backs and throne bases at a later period. There are instances of later images being distinguished from the earlier ones by the presence of the Bodhisattvas on their flanks, while the unfinished images

and a completely unplanned positioning of images in one of the later caves suggests a period of decline setting in around the middle of the sixth century. The story of fluctuating patronage remained one of the principal concerns in Spink's short chronology. In the first place impressions of fluctuating patronage can be derived from complete and elegant or incomplete and disheveled appearances of the caves. The few inscriptions that Spink used for reconstructing the temporal breaks told him about the larger context of political dislocation when there was a shrinkage of Vakataka patronage, completely disrupted by Asmaka hegemony at the turn of the fifth century when the new rulers of the region gave priority to their own caves, especially cave number 26 by leaving others in an unfinished condition. Spink also succeeded in establishing a connection between the changing source of patronage and the emergence of new styles as the new patrons, in this case the Asmakas and their protégés among the monks, insisted on new forms of images and decorative motifs in an attempt to register their presence in one of the major centers of Buddhist culture in India's antiquity. In other words Spink's close appraisals of the styles of sculptures and paintings and the inscriptions issued by the ruling classes enabled him to locate a precise period of a few decades in the later half of the fifth century when excavations of most of the caves were undertaken. (Spink, 1991: 67-70)

## V

Obviously enough, historical reflection on Ajanta's status as a heritage site can not be seen in isolation from the early archaeological initiatives in India which unraveled before the public these ancient treasures on which frequent debates occurred among the specialists on the site's antiquity and main features. We have already examined how Ajanta as an archaeological site was unsystematically explored since the middle of the nineteenth century. It was largely through Fergusson's initiatives that a few initial steps were taken towards the proper excavation of the site of Ajanta from the late 1840s. Earlier in 1844 the Royal Asiatic Society in London was persuaded by him to take an interest in the preservation of the Ajanta caves and in making copies of the paintings. Later in 1848 as a follow up measure the Bombay cave temple Commission was set up which undertook the work of clearing the place of accumulated earth and debris. In addition Captain Robert Gill of the Madras army was sent to make oil copies of the paintings of the Ajanta caves. (Singh, 2004: 55-56) Although the establishment of the Archaeological Survey in 1871 followed by the formation of an independent archaeological establishment in western India in 1873 gave an additional impetus to archaeological explorations, yet the Survey officials in their reports frequently complained about the enormous difficulty in carrying on this work in the absence of adequate financial provision and the usual indifference of the Nizam's Government about the upkeep of the site. At one stage there was a proposal to peel off the frescoes and transfer them to a museum. Even Cunningham had given his concurrence to this plan of the

Jeejebhoy School of Art in Bombay. This was not implemented at the intervention of other officials of the Survey who felt that the artifacts required to be preserved in their original location. (Singh, 2004: 217-18, 352)

As late as 1907, the Survey's reports regretted the absence of a proper ambience in which the frescoes would become more accessible to the public under proper care and conservation by the experts. A report of 1907 recorded how local authorities did not adequately protect the caves. There was one chowkidar who was responsible for the security and protection of the monument but lived in village a few miles away, possibly at Fardapur where Captain Gill had taken up his residence. The chowkidar never accompanied the visitors to the caves as a result of which they were damaging the paintings and the inscriptions. The caves, which were 'dirty and full of foul smell were also damaged by water seeping from above.' In some of them pillars had crumbled. A window screen in cave 16 had been broken. An old inscription had disappeared and cave 14 was totally inaccessible. Visitors mainly from Europe started visiting this site since the 1880s. In the absence of adequate security such visitations became a source of much vandalism. This was an inevitable consequence of Ajanta's passage from darkness to light. As it happened in many other sites the culture of tourism started taking its toll of the treasure that nature had hitherto protected.<sup>6</sup> In a report of 1905 Henry Cousens, then officiating as the head of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey, recalled his experience at Ajanta in the 1880s when the place had become somewhat accessible and in the process became a hunting ground for many European antic dealers. Couseans writes in his report "I noticed from my camp a mile and a half from the caves, a party of visitors passed to and from. In the afternoon, I was up at the cave myself, and in cave 17, I noticed that the head of a rakshasa or demon which I had seen standing on a day or two before had been newly cut out. I then made enquiries as to who the European was who was a party to the caves that morning and found he was M. McDermot, a member of the service camping at Ajanta. On my writing a note to him, he replied that this was done without his knowledge, but was presented to him by the peshkar at Ajanta. He regretted the fact that the same had been left in the corner of his tent where it had been trodden upon and destroyed."<sup>7</sup>

About a couple of few decades later than Couseans' visit to the newly emerging archaeological site in the 1880s, still surrounded by difficult terrain and unpleasant conditions, Ajanta changed remarkably. The kind of indifference that the Nizam government had shown in the past about the upkeep of such treasures was replaced by a growing interest in archaeology. In fact Hyderabad was one of those princely states that had set up a full-fledged archaeological department. Golam Yazdani, an associate of John Marshall became the Nazim of the archaeological department of Hyderabad.<sup>8</sup> Yazdani entrusted the responsibility for the proper maintenance of the caves to Sayed Ahmad, who was an artist and made some of the earliest copies of the frescoes. The Nizam administration advertised

the archaeological treasures of Ajanta in order to attract visitors. Incidentally the Begum of Bhopal who always had a keen interest in conservation work at Sanchi and had resisted all attempts to transfer the custody of the place to the Indian Government's archaeological department, issued a circular that was sent around India to invite parties of students and knowledgeable visitors to visit Sanchi.<sup>9</sup> It was in these ways that information about important archaeological sites was promoting the historical culture of tourism.

Promotion of this culture however, depended largely on the easy accessibility and proper conservation of the sites. A report that the famous French art historian and specialist in Indian iconography A. Foucher published in the Times of India on 25th March 1919 underlines the process through which a site like Ajanta became attractive for the tourists. He was commenting on conservation work in Ajanta and did not endorse some of the measures that the conservationists were adopting. He complained of the fact that certain chemicals which were used for purposes of brightening the paintings were harmful. Yet Foucher's letter emphasized the important changes that the Nizam Government had successfully introduced to make it more accessible and attractive. Foucher regarded this as one of the most noble deeds of the Nizam's. Comparing his first visit to the caves in 1897 he was greatly relieved to see that visitors were spared the long and tiring journey on bullock carts from Pochera to Fardapur, the foothill of the Ajanta hills. A new road enabled the travelers to reach Fardapur by tonga more quickly than in earlier times. During his earlier visit he had found that most of the caves were open 'to all kinds of destroying intruders, men or beasts birds or insects; so that when at work.....I had no choice left, except between the fierce sunshine outside and the sickening smell of the bats in the interior'. The caves wore a dilapidated look. The mouths of the caves were blocked broken in several places, as the ancient pillars had crumbled down. During his recent visit in 1919 he found that all this had been changed. New pillars, although modern creations built of the same stone as the ancient ones made their existence secure. Stone stairs and a path with a parapet running around the cliff lead from one cave to another. Some of these caves in the meanwhile had been wholly 'cleared of the red earth that once silted there.....those which contained paintings have been carefully closed to objectionable guests like bats and smoke making yogis.' To a man like Foucher these were distinct improvements that were added to the attractions of Ajanta for travelers, thanks largely to the enlightened efforts of the Nizam government. The Nizam government in addition to undertaking conservation work was keen to promote tourism as well. Near the old bungalow of Fardapur the Government was then building a new one in order to accommodate visitors to the site. All these measures successfully encouraged a historical culture of tourism by turning a place that had been inaccessible just half a century ago into a cultural site of great archaeological importance.<sup>10</sup> Reports on Ajanta's art works, often comparing them some of the more lofty examples of European art, began to appear in Burlington Art magazine. (Ross, 1916: 154-161)

VI

By the time Foucher came back to the site in 1919 the concern for the preservation of Ajanta had already motivated the Nizam's state to adopt a policy of conservation of the site. In 1915 the Nizam's state of Hyderabad set up an archaeological department. One of the functionaries of this Hyderabad Archaeological Department was Golam Yazdani. Yazdani was an artist by training but his apprenticeship with Sir John Marshall gave him the necessary skill of a conservator of archaeological site. Not unnaturally his four volumes on the Ajanta paintings remained one of the most systematic attempts of photographic conservation of the paintings when their life was threatened by the vagaries of time and nature. The paintings had already been damaged by the fire lit by the Hindu ascetics who made these caves into their temporary shelters. With visitors and tourists frequenting Ajanta caves from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, vandalism, as reported by Couseans also became a major danger. Yazdani also recognized that the copies of the paintings made by Robert Gill and John Griffiths and Lady Herringham more recently failed to satisfy the connoisseurs. To procure more faithful copies of the frescoes became the policy of the archaeological department of Hyderabad from the beginning. Accordingly the Department appointed Syed Ahmed, a local artist who had received his training under Lady Herringham 'to copy the frescoes with greater fidelity to the originals.' Lady Herringham's reproductions however left the connoisseurs with considerable dissatisfaction with the result that more accurate photographic documentation began to receive greater priority. The proposal for the photographic production of the paintings however was not easily practicable. Centuries of neglect allowed moisture and dirt to form a crust on the paintings. In order to create brightness the archaeologists added varnish on them by causing even greater damage to the paintings. Yet, the generous financial support of the Nizam's state enabled the archaeological department of Hyderabad to invite Italian restorers to do the cleaning work of the paintings so that the camera could capture the many shades of colour which remained hidden behind the dingy smear of dirt and varnish. It is largely because of generous financial support of Sir Akbar Hydari, a powerful member of the Nizam's bureaucracy that the ambitious project of the reproduction of frescoes by colour photography was undertaken. The result of this initiative was the Yazdani volumes on Ajanta which provided a distinctly nationalist interpretation on Ajanta not merely as a sanctuary of the monks but also as a cultural centre of international eminence in the fifth century A.D. long before modern scholarship came to project it as one of the great centers of Indian heritage. (Yazdani, 1930: 1-3)

The main focus in the volumes produced by Yazdani was on paintings. In a poetic introduction Yazdani situates the site in its physical context 'reminding the reader of the cultural ambience in which these caves had been hewn and decorated by creative artisans and artists.' Yazdani writes 'in the neighbourhood small hamlets still survived where the Bhiksu in the olden days went with his alms bowl to beg food. There also in striking contrast

could have been seen rajas and ranis in rich clothes and jewellery and with all the paraphernalia of royalty, richly caparisoned elephants and horse sand long trains of smartly dressed followers, coming to pay homage to the anchorites of Ajanta.' Indeed a poetic introduction to a place which in the midst of rocks was 'clad with the most luxuriant foliage.....on the bosom of which the stream of Waghora pursues a sinuous course, through bush and gramble interlaced in an impenetrable mass.' Yazdani's volume however wished to offer more than merely a poetic description of the place and its paintings. Locating Ajanta in India's ancient art tradition was his main objective as he tried to define Indian art as a decorative art which shows 'a richness of imagination and a love for decorative detail.' In the paintings of cave 1, which by common consensus was one of the earliest caves, this particular quality was however missing. In comparison the later caves represented more the lineaments of what the nationalist art historians came to describe as the defining feature of Indian art. (Yazdani, 1932: 1-3) Yazdani's chronological sequence understood the rise and fall of Ajanta in terms of the flourish and decline of ancient Indian art. He traced the period of flourish from the third century when the austerity of the earlier caves was supplanted by the magnificence of the paintings. From the sixth century however he saw its decline partly in matters concerning technique but mostly in terms of the increasing narrowness of the painter's subjects with the growing lack of importance of the Jataka stories which provided the artist with the very important literary substance. (Yazdani, 1942: 2) Yazdani felt that the noble traditions of the art of Ajanta continued for several centuries, 'but in the latter half of the sixth century A.D. during the reign of the Chalukyan kings, who, although tolerant to Buddhism in the beginning, professed and enthusiastically patronized the Brahminical religion, a radical change came in the inner spirit' with the result that the specimens of the later times became more conventional in the sense of representing Buddha in a particular posture. The monotony of such artistic creations is contrasted with the wider field of the Jatakas which allowed full opportunity for the display of their artistic fancy and technical skill. At a later time subjects as gods or kings began to dominate artistic imagination taking the painters away from the rich textures of life that the Ajanta frescoes during the height of Ajanta represented. (Yazdani, 1952: 3-6)

It is obvious that Yazdani's treatment besides the more technical aspects of use of colour or lines was closely tied with his understanding of Ajanta as a Buddhist site of a period when despite the deep impact of religiosity in the Ajanta art secular life as well as nature inspired the artistic imagination. But more than this Yazdani as a protagonist of Indian art praised the Ajanta frescoes as examples of realistic painting, portraying life in as naturalist a manner as possible. The comparison that he makes with Italian paintings of the renaissance or with the work of the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt brings out clearly his nationalist sentiment. He went to the extent of suggesting that the painters of Ajanta understood long before the Italian innovators during the renaissance the importance of

perspectives. The paintings of the round pavilion of Cave 16 were cited as an example which rebutted the charge that the artists of Ajanta did not understand perspective. In all likelihood this was provoked by comments by writers like Robert Ross that the Ajanta paintings were decidedly inferior to the European masterpieces during the renaissance. The effect of perspective, according to Yazdani was produced by a number of devices, in certain cases deeper colours were used for the background that the figures painted in the front in lighter colours may stand out in relief. Whatever Yazdani argued Ajanta paintings fell short of the modern day perspective paintings. The comparison with the renaissance acquires importance not for its historicity but for the manner in which Ajanta provided to the Indian nationalists with the visual material from ancient times for them to score a point over the west especially with regard to the oft-repeated claim of artistic genius.

This grand narrative of Yazdani however contained a smaller sub-text. Yazdani was emphatic about Ajanta's independence from the Gupta art. He saw it more as a part of a local tradition reflecting 'local Deccan genius, stimulated of course by the rich tradition and glorious vision of Buddhist religion.' Once the Buddhist context disappeared, the moment of decline set in with the South Indian art falling to a position of 'a decorative craft'. While this reiterates the usual story of a continuous development of art traditions from around the First century A.D to the Sixth century, this also called for a comparative method by which the paintings of Ajanta were placed alongside the sculptures of Amaravati. Besides the Jataka scenes which featured prominently in the Amaravati sculptures, Yazdani could identify close resemblance of human forms, depicted in two different ways in the two different sites. This was based as Yazdani emphatically argues in favour of a local tradition 'on an artistic tradition which was evolved in the Deccan as a result of the religious beliefs and aesthetic ideals which were common to the sculptors of Amaravati and the painters of Ajanta.' (Yazdani, 1952: 2)

Finally in his assessment of the historical importance of Ajanta Yazdani decided to go beyond the level of local patriotism to make out the point that the site in the fifth century, under the enlightened patronage of the Vakataka kings, became an important center for cultural pilgrimage for people from distant lands where Buddhism existed as the dominant religion. He found that the paintings in Ceylon, Afghanistan, central Asia and even in some parts of China exhibited clear influence on the Buddhist art of Ajanta. The impact that the Ajanta art traditions made on the neighbouring regions is easily understandable as Yazdani ran into the figures on the rock wall of Bagh which had remarkable similarities with similar human forms in Ajanta but the manner in which he established the connection of this art with very distant lands imparts into his treatment of the site, mainly from the art historians point of view a very distinct meaning. In this work Ajanta emerged as an ancient center of culture, frequented by visitors from far away places just in the same way as a modern visitor like O. C. Ganguly emphasized its importance as a center of cultural

pilgrimage. The heritage that O. C. Ganguly was trying to relive in his travel piece was organically linked with the way a man like Yazdani saw Ajanta as a cultural center of international significance more than one thousand years ago.

## VII

This essay in which I have tried to resolve some of my doubts about the complicated relationship between ‘history’ and ‘heritage’ has grown out of a small piece that I had written a few years ago on the interface between archaeology and tourism. (Kumar Forthcoming) The issue of heritage, as was perceived then, remained an important dimension in the development of a tourism culture in the early twentieth century. It goes without saying, that the attraction of a place does not entirely depend on the knowledge that historians produce on historical sites visited by people from far-flung regions. It is possible that different classes of visitors categorized the significance of the sites in terms of their preoccupations and biases. If that is the case, where does archaeological knowledge figure in this chaotic frame of multiple visions? A tentative answer is presented in what can still be regarded as an incomplete essay. Nonetheless, the development of the archaeological knowledge about Ajanta which inevitably spawned a wide range of debates on its chronology and stylistic evolution, certainly made a major contribution to the making of this site emerging as a defining element in India’s cultural heritage. Allowing for the unpredictability of the impressions that visitors to the site are likely to form and the varied meanings that they are likely to derive from them, the contribution of archaeology still can not be discounted. Admittedly, a hiatus may exist between the ways a historian determines its significance and a visitor develops his understanding. Yet, the historical discovery of the place which itself can be located on the time scale of development of knowledge, came to provide the core substance for varied understandings about heritage to flourish.

### Notes

- 1 In a recent book, *History in the Vernacular*, (Ranikhet, 2010) edited by Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee, attention is drawn to the varied ways through which people remembered their pasts, often outside the orbit of academic history which developed in India in the nineteenth century largely under the impact of colonial knowledge systems.
- 2 Akshay Kumar Maitreya wrote a small piece on the antiquity of Maldah district in northern Bengal, in which he tried to establish its antiquity by linking it with ancient Pundravardhana. While he called upon his readers to visit the ancient sites of North Bengal, he was regretting the fact that the attention of the visitors was entirely monopolized by the relics of the Sultanate even though the place was strewn with numerous ancient relics calling for the attention of the tourists and the Government. See Akshay Kumar Maitreya, ‘Puratan Maldaha’ (Old Maldah) in *Pravasi* (1907-1908, B.S 1314); Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti, ‘Pandua Bhraman’ (Travels in Pandua) in *Pravasi* (1903-1904, B.S. 1310). Jnanendra Mohan Das, another literary luminary who was the celebrated author of *Banger Bahire Bangali*, a work in celebration of

## Interpreting Heritage: Ajanta in Historical Imagination

the achievements of the migrant Bengali intelligentsia outside their province, also wrote a number of pieces of this nature in journals like *Pravasi*. As an example, one may cite his short piece on Sarnath, the well-known Buddhist site in north India in *Pravasi* 1906-1907, B.S 1313.

- 3 One example from writings of such kinds will suffice for assessing their contribution to this culture of tourism by advertising the ancient pedigree of the place. In an essay namely, 'Bateshwar and Bankhandeswar' in *Pravasi*, 1910-1911, B.S. 1316-1317, Jnanendra Mohan Das wished to draw the attention of the Bengali reading public to a religious site called Bateswar near Sikohabad in present day Uttar Pradesh falling in the midway between Ettawah and Tundla on the then Eastern Indian railway. Describing the arduous journey that he undertook to visit the place, locally famous for its annual fair, he introduced the readers to a number of Siva temples. The most distinctive of course was the main shrine of Bateswar in which the lingam represented the synthetic iconography of early medieval times. The lingam made of black stone carried with it the face of the meditating Buddha. By way of describing this image the author dwelt upon the complex history of synthesis between Buddhism and Hinduism. The tale of the place took a new turn when Das dealt with the history of how the region came under the control of a local Rajput lineage whose leader was Raju Rawat. He had subjugated the Bhils who lived in the adjoining forests to set up the principality of Bhadwar. Later the Chauhanas vanquished this family to emerge as the region's rulers. This Rajput family appropriated the Bhil deity Bankahndeswar to turn it into Bateswar Mahadev. All this was solid history that the author backed up with suitable citations from the archaeological reports but to establish the pedigree of the place, he also strayed into the legend of how the blessings of Bateswar Mahadev transformed the daughter of a prince into a male heir by making possible her sexual transformations.
- 4 Samarendra Nath Gupta, who was the Vice-Principal of the Mayo school of Art at Lahore, wrote a few popular pieces on Ajanta paintings while O.C.Ganguly was anxious to unravel Ajanta's heritage. Gupta's essay called 'The Classical Art of Ajanta' feature in the famous periodical *The Modern Review* in its 1914 edition. A Bengali version of the same essay, entitled 'Ajanta Guhar Chitraboli' (The Paintings of Ajanta), published in the *Pravasi* in 1915, B.S. 1322 wanted to reach out to a popular vernacular readership. By the time Samarendra Nath Gupta was writing on the art works of Ajanta, the site had been almost wholly explored by the archaeologists.
- 5 One of the earliest accounts was written by J. E. Alexander based on his chancy visit to Ajanta hills in 1824. Subsequently Dr. Thomas Bird, in the company of two other officers in the Madras army, visited the site in 1828 on which a short notice on its paintings was published in 1836 in the Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society. Burgess writes about these early explorations in the text that we have cited.
- 6 Office of the Director General of Archaeology—File No. 243, Serial-1-2, April 1907
- 7 Office of the Director General of Archaeology—File No. 37, Serial-1, May 1905
- 8 Office of the Director General of Archaeology—File 318, 1918
- 9 Office of the Director General of Archaeology—File 447, 1919
- 10 Office of the Director General of Archaeology—File 184 Serial-1-13, 1919

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## **REVIEW ARTICLE**

### **A Book to Defend a Book —Susmita Basu Majumdar**

Holt. F. and Bopearachchi. O. edited , The Alexander Medallion: Exploring the origins of a unique artifact, Imago Lattara, 2011, pp. 104. ISBN 978-2-951166-79-9

Osmund Boaperachchi and Philippe Flandrin coauthored a book in French entitled *Le Portriat d' Alexandre le Grand*, in 2005, where in, a unique gold medallion of Alexander was brought to light from one of the world's largest hoards from west Gandhara, the Mir Zakah hoard. This publication aroused a huge debate among the numismatists, not only were reviews written, criticizing the book but also other articles came up in favour and against. So much so that the numismatists almost divided them into two enemy camps, all set to attack and defend their own bases. Osmund Bopearacchi and Frank Holt the present authors of this book were of the opinion that a public forum was required to put the debate open to the world and carry it forward. A gold medallion, an extraordinary one, as they believe, became the centre of an international roundtable discussion— “The Medallion of Alexander the Great from the Mir Zakah Deposit” held on 26th March 2007 at the Ecole normale superieure in Paris. The present book under review is a collection of essays defending the authenticity of the medallion from various angles.

The gold medallion which made the scholars declare an academic battle now definitely needs a sketchy description. It has on the obverse, the bust of Alexander wearing the elephant’s scalp, the horn of Zeus-Ammon, and the aegis and an elephant on the reverse. The book has a foreword written by Sir John Boardman from Woodstock, who mentions that when ever an object comes from a less sure provenance the problem of the possible infiltration of forgeries arises. His statement that “although the coin adds to our knowledge of the history of the period without very seriously altering it” is so correct that leads one to question that if it does not change ones opinion about the issuer or even a significant change in the history, the question of forging such a medallion definitely stands weak. In the preface the authors mention that if it is genuine this object rewrites a crucial chapter in the evolution of Hellenistic civilization. It would give fresh insight into the reign of Alexander the great, and a clearer starting point for the emergence of the potent idea that kings—like pharaohs—might also be gods. The use of elephant-scalp, horn of Ammon and aegis relates it to the Ptolemaic issues but this medallion being earlier in chronological order would vouch for their presence in the Alexander’s time. According to Holt and Bopearachchi the onset of the battle of Hydaspes was marked by the issuing of the silver

coins of elephant on obverse and chariot on the reverse which indicated Alexander's Zeus like control of the weather as the battle was fought in the rainy season (326 BCE), who immobilized the chariots of his enemies. As a sequel was issued another coin which had on the obverse an elephant and on the reverse the depiction of a bowman (Indian) who could not anchor their tall weapons in the rain-soaked ground again another sequel is found in the well known large silver issues, decadachm, of Macedonian king wearing a battle head-gear holding a thunderbolt like Zeus on one side and on the other the scene of king Porus on his elephant being captured by Alexander on horse. The authors now situate this unique gold medallion as a final sequel to this series wherein on the obverse Alexander has been shown defied with the three significant attributes elephant's scalp, horn of Zeus-Ammon and aegis they describe the riderless elephant on the reverse as symbolizing the defeated Indians.

The book begins with the contribution of Frank Holt whose article is entitled 'Authenticity'. This essay is well articulated and is almost written in defence mode. It deals with all the probable arguments made by the contenders doubting the authenticity of the medallion. Taking each and every critique one by one he places their arguments and refutes or defends the authenticity of the medallion in an excellent fashion. One would be convinced by his arguments so much so that he/she would like the title of Andrew Stewart's contribution in this book 'Doubt the doubters'. Holt begins his journey towards authenticity by declaring that in disciplines like numismatics where more often fresh evidences crop up to change the present prevailing ideas they have to be accepted in a more open manner rather than criticizing or declaring every new and unique object a forgery. He speaks in clear terms on developing methodologies that allow numismatists to absorb new data. Authenticity of numismatic specimen is difficult to judge, it mostly depends on logical reasoning and numismatist's hunch which may be mentioned as his/her practical experience. Holt very logically argues in favour of an artifact's provisional authenticity through critical scrutiny. The strongest argument put forth by Holt is that in case of a controversy on the authenticity of any specimen, due to any reason, like lack of proper archeological context, strongest arguments should be made to doubt the authenticity of the artifact. But after rigorous efforts to declare it a forgery if the object still stands or survives the test i.e. if it cannot be proven false, then it must be allowed a benefit of doubt and be treated as provisionally genuine. Holt deals with the critics who after the publication of the medallion in 2005 have given arguments against the medallion and have declared in clear terms that it is a modern forgery. Among such critics are Wolfgang Fischer Bossert, Sylvia Hurter, Karsten Dahmen, John Kroll, Carmen Arnold Biucchi, Shailendra Bhandare and Andrew Chugg. Holt gives the arguments of the critics and refutes them one by one.

A good and thorough researcher would never depend on secondary quotes or statements

and would prefer to read the articles by the critics to find whether Holt really presents their (critic's) case well. Thus the present book is one which compels the reader to read another one and a few more articles and reviews to understand the pretext and to think what actually inspired if not compelled the present authors Holt and Bopearachchi to coauthor this one? Though there are five more authors who have contributed in this book besides Frank Holt and Osmund Bopearachchi. But in the making of this book there are a whole lot of critics whose criticisms have actually given birth to this one. The authors rightly mention that, "Some of the world's most interesting objects refuse to give up their secrets without a fight".

Holt mentions four cases against the medallion published till date and deals with the critics in two parts: those published before the Paris roundtable and those after. Of course, the former were reviews of the book by Bopearachchi and Flandrin. First critic Fischer Bossert who condemns the medallion on stylistic grounds and technical ones of which the second category holds more weight. Bossert doubts the mint fresh condition of the coins and criticizes by saying that the impeccable preservation of the medallion was the first thing that troubled him. Holt dismisses this charge on the ground that the Mir Zakah was not an emergency hoard drawing together materials circulating contemporaneously. He strongly argues on the basis of evidence that in the first Mir Zakah deposit at several instances earlier issues had turned out to be less worn and in excellent condition. Bossert's next argument was that the engraving of the elephant is ridiculous and the die cutter was not well versed with the elephant anatomy. Similar objection about the unrealistic portrayal of elephant was also pointed out by another critic Silvia Mani Hurter in her review. This point has been refuted by Holt strongly on the ground that even on the silver issues of Alexander which are beyond doubt accepted as genuine ones there are such issues of less realistic portrayal of elephants. To support his arguments Holt has cited the funny and less realistic elephants portrayed on silver issues with photographs to support the fact that on the gold medallion the distorted elephant which Bossert ridicules as 'dancing ballet on his toes' and hence less realistic is not an exception. On the reverse as well, Bossert has cited some defects which led him to declare the die to be a modern forger's art. These according to Bossert are gaps between the different elements of the face, which in his words are 'pieced together without organic transitions'. Further he has cited more defects in the hanging lower eyelid, lifeless surface of the temple and cheek. These arguments causing stylistic displeasure to Bossert have been excellently nullified by Holt with quotes from experts like Blanche Brown who had mentioned about such problems of die makers long before the discovery of this medallion in the contemporary Hellenistic coin portraiture. Thus these facts make a strong case in favour of the gold medallion being a genuine rather than bring it into the folds of doubt. In favour of his argument Holt cites a parallel in the Ecbatana coin which has the closest portrait to the medallion under discussion. Bossert's

last stylistic argument was the employment of border lines to delineate the elephant skin, this style he believes is totally unknown to the ancient coin engraving, Holt here has shown in figure 8 which is a Ptolemaic Alexander tetradrachm the distinct use of border lines. Besides the above mentioned stylistic features of Bossert's displeasure there are four technical anomalies that Bossert stresses upon and also considers the technical errors as more important ones to declare this medallion a forgery. First point is the 'border of dots' distinct feature of the obverse is not common to the Porus coins. Holt smashes this argument by citing examples of coins with photographs where in dots have been used on the obverse and also on reverse. Secondly Bossert mentions that the medallion has 6:00 die axis to which Holt reacts strongly and mentions this as a major mistake by Bossert as the coin in question has a 12:00 die axis and has been stressed upon time and again by Bopearachchi in the first publication. Third argument of Bossert which Holt deals next is that of the monogram Xi and AB being on the reverse of the coin is disturbing as the Porus double shekels have them on two sides. Holt attracts the attention of the reader to the fact that there is no such rule or consistency in the silver medallions to have the control marks on two sides i.e. one each rather he also points out some specimens that do not have any such marks and others that have one mark on each side and even those which are similar to this gold medallion and have both the marks on one side. Thus pointing towards inconsistency in the positioning of the control marks during this period he makes his point. Holt next moves forth to cite a blunder committed by Bossert who has mentioned all the Porus coins as double shekels even the ones which are five shekel in denomination. Fischer Bossert's last argument cited as technical anomaly is the sudden disappearance of the elephant trunk on the headdress before reaching the flan's edge, this too has been refuted strongly by Holt who has given a magnified image of the elephant scalp focusing on the trunk portion which not only reaches the border of dots on the edge of the flan but also intersects it. Holt sticks to his style or methodology proposed that each point has to be discussed and given full attention and if well refuted then the null hypothesis remains unproved.

Next Holt proceeds to deal with the arguments put forward by Silvia Mani Hurter, whose review of Bopearachchi and Flandrin's book had also condemned the medallion as a forgery. Holt mentions that Hurter had identified "two main areas of concern: the problem of provenance and some questions about the medallion itself". However, Holt very rightfully argues, stating the example of the dubious discovery of the Porus medallion from an equally if not more troubling context, that a sketchy provenance invites caution but proves nothing. Hurter also argues about the scaly aegis worn by Alexander which is more close to the Ptolemaic issues. Holt states that even in the Ptolemaic issues we do not find a linear progression, then why shall we expect a unilinear progression of the scaly aegis from Alexander down to the Ptolemaic ones. Holt proceeds to mention scholars like John Kroll

and Carmen Arnold-Biucchi who have not directly condemned the medallion as a forgery but have chosen to ignore it on the basis of its controversial position. Next Holt deals with Bhandare's article which focuses on elephant medallions and takes the position to declare that the gold medallion does not fit in as a prototype for the Ptolemaic issues. Bhandare's article focuses on the silver Porus medallions; he vouches for the fact that the Porus medallions are not related to the battle on Hydaspes between Alexander and Porus. He believes that these are coins and not medals and possibly produced in Iraq. If Bhandare's point is taken into consideration then the gold medallion will not be a part of the series of coins or medals issued to commemorate these events and neither will it fit in as a sequel to the silver decadadrachms depicting Alexander's capture of Porus. However Bhandare's chronological arrangement has been criticized by Holt as faulty and also the closest parallel of the gold medallion cited by Bhandare i.e. the Seleucid double-daric according to Holt is not the nearest in terms of comparison. He mentions that if a nearest parallel is to be cited it should be the specimen preserved in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France. Bhandare's argument of the prominently engraved eye of Alexander on the gold medallion is reminiscent of the Egyptian style and not of an eastern mint has also been critiqued by Holt. Finally, Holt deals with Andrew Chugg's criticisms put forth in his article entitled 'Is the Gold Porus Medallion a Lifetime Portrait of Alexander the Great?' Holt mentions Chugg's one as the latest and fullest case for the null thesis that this medallion is a forgery and accepts the challenge. Chugg challenged the advocates of the gold medallion to provide convincing explanations for the incongruities that he had listed. Holt numbers these incongruities nine and has answered them one by one. Apparently, Chugg's article has only seven points that are numbered (1-7), this 'nine-count indictment' has been created by Holt taking the number of objections raised by Chugg. Before mentioning the seven objections in counts Chugg had already raised one objection, the same one made by Hurter and Bhandare, i.e. the elephant scalp issue which according to Chugg too resembles the later Ptolemaic forms rather than the earlier. In Chugg's own words, "Either Ptolemy deviated from the Porus medallion prototype for his first version, then abandoned all of his deviations for his second type, or else a modern forger has naively based a fake coin on Ptolemy's second version design." After mentioning this point he clearly states that, "Some further points" (i.e. besides this one), "may be cited that relate to the question of authenticity of the gold Porus medallion". Next are the arguments 1-7 out of which number 5 has been split into two by Holt and dealt separately bringing his count to nine. Holt however should have clearly mentioned that the so called nine indictments is not how Chugg puts it in his article it his own way of dealing all the issues raised by Chugg. Thus here we would like to discuss the points one to seven put forth by Chugg and Holt's response to them, first issue is that of the forger did not imitate the portrait of Alexander from the Ptolemaic issues rather he took the tiny ivory carving found in Tomb II at Vergina

and hence calls the imaginary forger “sufficiently inexpert”. Holt refutes this by declaring that the ivory miniature actually bears little resemblance to the gold medallion. There is an issue of proportion as the size and shape of the nose, brow, lower eyelid, cheekbone and lips, too many differences, to cite it as a model for the gold medallion. Rather Holt points towards the proximity of the famous Alexander mosaic from Pompei with the medallion. This similarity according to Holt would rather prove the medallion to be genuine and not otherwise i.e. work of any forger. Second point made by Chugg was that of the truncated elephant trunk, he went a step further by declaring that forger only had one Ptolemy coin—mis-struck one. Holt ridicules the wits of Chugg by mentioning that the forger who sought from the academic literature the most likely lifetime portrait of Alexander to copy knew only one Ptolemy coin which happened to be the mis-struck specimen. The third one from Chugg was the placement of the monograms, already dealt by Holt. The fourth one raised was that of the aegis, specifically the size of the knot tied under Alexander’s chin which again was not linear this had already been addressed in the non linear progression of the device on the Ptolemaic issues and Holt logically shows that knots provide no basis for questioning the authenticity of the medallion as it maintains a parity with early mintages of Ptolemy I. Chugg’s next point i.e. fifth in number is split into two parts by Holt as already mentioned above. These are: that the medallion looks more fresh or is less worn out and regarding the die axis. These had been already dealt by Holt, however he chooses to elaborate on the die axis issue, though he had mentioned that more than a third of silver Elephant/Alexander coins have a 12:00 die axis and having a 12:00 axis makes a stronger case for the gold medallion. Seventh issue raised by Chugg (actually numbered as 6 in his article) is related to the elephant ear on the obverse of the medallion, which according to him resembles a late Ptolemaic issue including a nodule which only appears on the late ones. Though non linear progression could have been a sufficient answer but Holt proceeds to mention that there are some features of the medallion’s elephant ear that do more closely resemble the earlier rather than later Ptolemaic style and proceeds to explain them in minute detail. Chugg’s final and ninth point is the difference between the style and treatment of the ear on the obverse and the reverse which resembles a bat wing. Chugg’s dissatisfaction with the medallion lies in the fact that the elephant ears on Ptolemy coins and the Porus medallions have been merged on the gold medallion taking one from each despite the fact that the dies were carved by the same artist. Holt points to Chugg’s wrong notion by stating that on some specimens of Ptolemy featuring elephants pulling a chariot, the ears are quite like the bat wing and representations of such features scarcely resemble the living creatures. Finally Holt criticizes Chugg’s imaginary forger who on one hand is sufficiently inexpert and on the other is an expert as Chugg himself mentions that if the medallion is declared genuine then it would rank high among the greatest numismatic finds of all time. Firstly it

was Holt's work that had made Bopearachchi understand the extraordinary or revolutionary character of the medallion which he thought was only 'interesting'. Secondly Holt's work on the elephant medallions was published ten years after the discovery of the medallion and the forger had done it even before the publication was available for his aid, this according to him is ridiculous. After aptly refuting all the contenders Holt returns to his initial stand on methodology that any object should be declared provisionally genuine till declared a forged one. Finally he points to the AB monogram on the medallion and a thorough analysis shows that the silver and the gold medallions were craft of different die cutters.

The second article in this book is by Osmund Bopearachchi entitled, 'A Joy and a curse'. Bopearachchi begins by refuting the arguments of Silvia Mani Hurter published in the Swiss Numismatic Review, 2006, where she had reviewed the book by Bopearachchi and Flandrin. Hurter had criticized the over-involvement of Bopearachchi with the villagers in the site and according to her the enthusiasm showed by the author encouraged the illicit behavior of the local people (forgers?). Bopearachchi mentions that Bossert also holds similar views and is definitely biased and crosses the line by overstating certain things which has led Bopearachchi to doubt whether these authors have really read the book. Its really intriguing that Bossert even after going through the book has erred at stating the die axis as 6:00 instead of 12:00 which is clearly mentioned in the book and also he exaggerates the quantity of coins that had been mentioned by Bopearachchi as over half a million and Bossert turns it into 'millions'. In this context Bopearachchi also mentions that Chugg had correctly mentioned that the die axis was 12:00 but considers this as an error. He does not prolong the issue as it had already been elaborated by Holt and refuted quite satisfactorily. This made Bopearachchi to focus only on the Mir Zakah find, he proceeds methodically by showing the location its linkages and supports his presence and interaction on the spot with the local people in the markets. He stresses upon his consistent efforts to retrieve information about the second Mir Zakah for more than ten years. The discovery of the first and the second Mir Zakah hoards and the subsequent disposal of the antiquities have been elaborated here. Many more examples have been put forth to support the fact that the Alexander medallion is not the only unique object that this hoard revealed and also that it is not the only antiquity that is in a good state of preservation. The author considers it as a medallion and not a regular coin and hence one of the reasons responsible for less handling or relatively less corroded state. Similar objects that had undergone less handling, like the offering plaques of the Zoroastrian cult now in the Miho museum also from the Mir Zakah deposit have been illustrated as examples in support. The author again and again criticizes Hurter of not being aware of the publications on the Mir Zakah coins by him, though he mentions that it has been a tendency of Hurter to negate the existence of the Mir Zakah deposit which is ridiculous as the hoard/hoards was too huge to be defied.

Bopearachchi also expresses concern about her intentions on issue when she blames him for secrecy and handling of the gold medallion in a furtive way. He strongly condemns this blame with the arguments that not only were the critics invited for the round table conference where the medallion passed each hand but also was it shown to the public in a press conference organized under the auspices of Michel Amandry, Director General of the Cabinet des Medailles in Paris 2005 before it was finally displayed in Montpellier museum for a period of three months none of the critics ever had made an attempt to examine this medallion here. Hurter also criticizes the place of public display i.e. Montpellier, as not a hub of numismatists. Bopearachchi then proceeds to mention that some scholars have not criticized the authenticity but have taken a stand to ignore this medallion due to its controversial nature. Among them is Carmen Arnold- Biucchi, the President of the Numismatic Commision, who in her book Alexander's Coins and Alexander's Image, has deliberately not taken this medallion into consideration and states this deliberate omission in the book clearly. Such a statement makes the efforts of the critics of the medallion successful in their attempt to condemn it. This article ends on a note that it is not this medallion alone but many more such unique antiquities that this Mir Zakah has to offer to the world and his investigations on the second Mir Zakah is not yet over.

The next contribution in this book entitled 'Doubt the doubters' comes from a non numismatist and expert in Greek sculptures, Andrew Stewart. He mentions that the medallion's sculpting style in low relief goes very well with the late 4th century BC style. Stewart mentions the points in favour of the medallion as a fake or a genuine one but before that he mentions the reasons why a forger would select this one? The fact that this would complete the Porus series raises the doubt for it being a forged one. But immediately follows the point that we should not condemn artefacts too hastily and proposes to look carefully before passing a judgement. Third issue raised by him is that forgers tend to stick to the trend or are usually conventional. Finally he mentions that fakers are seldom intellectually adventurous, still less brilliantly intuitive. Before this medallion came into light all scholars unanimously agreed on the fact that Ptolemy invented the type around 320 BC and Seleucus and Agathocles had copied it. He then sarcastically mentions that, "only a truly gifted faker would boldly jettison these well entrenched orthodoxies and make these two brilliantly intuitive leaps on his own."

Stewart explains the attributes of Alexander especially his head gear. The elephant scalp portrays him as the master of elephants his conquest of India or over Porus. Alexander also wears Ammon's horn. He is believed to be Zeus Ammon's son, this claim according to Holt and Stewart had been validated by the great thunderstorm before the battle of Hydaspes that had neutralized Porus's fearsome bowmen and chariots. Stewart then mentions that it reminds us of the fact that it was Zeus Ammon who predicted that Alexander would rule the world. The aegis worn by Alexander symbolized Athena, the great expedition's divine

patroness or a sign of invincibility, omnipotence and divinity. Stewart mentions that aegis compliments the other two attributes and ‘together they produce a single, powerful, coherent message.’ He then mentions that the portrait of Alexander on the medallion is ugly and also mentions the proximity of the Alexander’s portrait with the Alexander mosaic. He states close parallels in ugly portraiture in the coin from the mint of Cyzicus as early as 370-350 and in sculpture broken nose Olympia Boxer etc. Mir Zakah ugly portrait is thus not unthinkable a generation later comments Stewart.

Maryse Blet-Lemarquand’s contribution entitled, ‘The origin of the gold’ is based on the scientific analysis of the medallion to defend its authenticity. The medallion was analysed using Laser Ablation Inductively coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) a quasi non destructive multi-elemental analytical method. The analysis reflected that the medallion consists of 97.7% gold and 1.8% silver and 0.4% copper with palladium as trace element. The higher concentration of palladium distinguishes this medallion from the other medallions or coins of Alexander and also from the other coins minted in Bactria. Rather the medallion has some similarities in composition with the late Kushana gold coins. Maryse very efficiently rules out the point that it was not minted by recycling Kushana gold coin by any forger as here is a major difference. In the late Kushana coins linearity in the concentrations of silver and copper may be observed but this trend cannot be observed in the medallion under consideration. Consequently she suggests an ‘Indian’ origin for the gold but is sceptical about it and leaves it on further inquiry. However, she mentions that the metal of the medallion was beyond doubt ancient gold.

Finally the book ends with the contribution of Philippe Flandrin, ‘The search for truth’ which is a sketchy outline of the coming of this medallion to light. It was Bopearachchi who introduced Flandrin to a Pakistani gentleman who owned the gold medallion according to his information the medallion was found at Mir Zakah in 1993. Then follows a note on the Miho museum collection which houses some antiquities from the Mir Zakah deposits. Flandrin’s contribution is not substantial but being a coauthor of the previous book on this particular medallion his contribution in this book seems a gesture of support still not withdrawn even after all the controversies.

The medallion coming from a different provenance other than the suggested find spot and also the fact that it came from a Pakistani dealer whose identity has not been revealed on his own request raises doubts in the minds of the opponents. Whether genuine or not the medallion from Mir Zakah II had covered a long journey and still remains at the centre of an international debate among rival numismatists. If proved genuine it would definitely be one of the best numismatic finds of the century and if not still it remains the finest forged specimen ever in the history of numismatic researches. The authors have mentioned that the book is based on the discussions that were made in the round table conference held in Paris, 2007. In this book they mention that they “would invite the reader to make

his or her own judgements based on the available evidence". In this book however they have provided the views of those scholars who hold their view in favour of the medallion's authenticity. If a reader has to make this judgement or choice it would definitely not be on the basis of this book as it has the opinions of a single camp. Thus this book leads the readers to read a lot more to finally form his or her opinion about the authenticity of this medallion.

The way the scholars have defended the medallion is passionate and initially before reading the book the reader is perplexed with the question in mind, a whole book on a medallion? And then another one to defend the previous book and the authenticity of the medallion isn't it too much? But by the time one ends reading this book and of course a lot more material that has been woven in the reference lists especially the arguments of the critics, one feels that the medallion—such a gorgeous one—deserves this book. However, if the book represented the articles from both the panels i.e. the pro and the critic panel then it would have made the reader's journey smoother.

It is left to time to really reveal whether this medallion is authentic or not but one of the strongest critic's statement that if proved genuine then "it would rank high among the greatest numismatic finds of all time" (Chugg) is really true and such a statement from the critic camp had inspired the present authors and pro medallion team to publish this book as an attempt to nail the authenticity of the medallion and to declare their find the greatest discoveries of all times.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks (Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia)*—Jason Neelis

Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2010, pages 390, price

Buddhism as a formal and institutional religion has a history in India spanning nearly seventeen centuries (6th century BCE-13th century CE.). It is not the mere history of a faith, though it has been approached too often from this viewpoint only. Taking Buddhism solely as an ‘-ism,’ just a form of faith or system of religion, its history has been sought to be traced through its doctrines and philosophies, its sects and schools, its affinities and interconnections with other Indian systems of faith or philosophy. Few comprehensive work has been done on Buddhism and trade networks. The importance of this kind of work lies in the fact that it is an interdisciplinary approach taking together the history of religion and its relation with economy (trade networks) of a given period of time and space. However, this need is fulfilled by Jason Neelis in his book entitled *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks (mobility and exchange within and beyond the Northwestern borderlands of South Asia)*. The author has discussed in detail the history of Buddhism in northwestern part of South Asia and its dissemination to Central Asia and China with the help of archaeological and literary sources. He has rightly pointed out that the routes followed by the Buddhist missionaries for transmission of Buddhism frequently overlapped and intertwined with those of merchants and traders in pursuit of both religious and economic goals. Since both itinerant monks and cenobitic communities inhabiting residential monasteries depended upon donations for material support, the dynamic growth of Buddhist institutions was directly linked with the generation of surplus resources. Thus, Buddhist transmission, which involved the transformation of basic ideas and common practices through interactions with local cultures and religious traditions, was symbiotically related to parallel processes of commercial and cultural exchanges. Hence this monograph throws light on the networks for transmission of Buddhism and cross cultural exchanges within and beyond the northwestern borderlands of South Asia. The book is further enriched by a number of tables, figures and maps.

It is important to note here that this volume is the result of a project work which was undertaken by the author in Ruhr University Bochum (Germany).

It contains seven chapters, each being again divided into certain sections. The introductory chapter begins with a ‘road map’ to theoretical models of religious mobility, critical issues in the study of religion and economics and methodologies for analyzing

primary sources. In the first section (Models for the Movement of Buddhism), the author has discussed in brief the different metaphors and paradigms for understanding patterns of Buddhist Movement by exploring possible alternatives to the typical view of the spread of Buddhism by gradual diffusion. In this connection, the author has referred to the theories of scholars like Erik Zürcher and Thomas Tweed. In the same section he has carefully dealt with ‘a networks approach’ to patterns of Buddhist transmission for understanding the relationships between religious mobility and cultural, intellectual, material and economic exchanges. Here the works of scholars namely James Heitzman, Monica Smith, Rodney Stark and Williams Sims Bainbridge deserves special mention. The following section (Merit, Merchants and the Buddhist Saṅgha) throws light on the symbiotic relation between the Buddhist community and the lay supporters for material donation without which the Buddhist Saṅgha cannot flourish. The third section (Sources and Methods for the study of Buddhist transmission) gives us an overview of relevant literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources and methodology adopted for the Buddhist transmission within and beyond South Asia.

The second chapter establishes a diachronic foundation for the present study beginning with the emergence of Buddhism in northern India during the time of the Buddha around the sixth century BCE (fifth century BCE according to Jeson Neelis) and continuing through the first millennium CE. Issues related to the date of the historical Buddha, the social, religious and economic environment in which he(Buddha) lives and the history of the initial phase of Buddhism till the Mauryan period, the spread of Buddhism to northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, the patronage given to religion by the Indo-Greeks, Scytho-Parthians and Kushāṇa rulers and their subordinates who migrated to northwestern India from Central Asia, cross cultural exchanges in the field of art, religion and trade networks is well presented in this chapter. The incorporation of the chronology of the Kushāṇa rulers, particularly the date of Kanishka on the basis of fresh epigraphic discoveries and the golden age theory of the Guptas shows the awareness and keenness of the author about the subject. However, author has not cited any reason ‘why the translation of Rabatak inscription published by B.N. Mukherjee in Indian Museum Bulletin (vol.XXX) is less reliable’. In the same chapter Dr Neelis has elaborately discussed the political situation of northwestern part of Indian subcontinent from the 5th century CE to 10th century CE. During this period the region concerned was ruled by Kidara Kushāṇas, Hūṇas and the Pañola Shāhī rulers of Gilgit. It is generally believed that Buddhism suffered decline during the invasion of the Hūṇas in the 5th and early 6th centuries CE. The Hūṇa king Mihirakula, who ruled over large parts of North-West and North India, was noted as a persecutor of Buddhism. According to the testimony of Xuanzang, Mihirakula destroyed one thousand six hundred Buddhist foundations in Gandhāra. However, this viewpoint is changed with the discovery of several inscriptions mentioned by Dr. Neelis in his book. The recent publication of a

Sanskrit inscription on a thin copper scroll belonging to the Schoyen collection provides valuable information about the identities of Hūṇas who are named in a list of secondary donors who received credit for the erection of a relic stūpa. The Hūṇa rulers Toramāṇa and Javūka are also associated with the donation of a monastery in another Buddhist inscription from Kūrā in the Salt Range in the western Punjab. Again in the Indian borderlands, particularly in South-Eastern Afghanistan several Buddhist establishments flourished during this period. Among these, we can refer to the monasteries at Hadda, Foundikistan, Guldara etc. Near the modern town of Jalalabad (ancient Nagarahāra) are the ruins of Hadda. It was an important Buddhist site. Xuanzang in his description of Hadda (Hi-lo) says that ‘the Saṅghārāmas are many but the priests are few; the stūpas are desolate and ruined.’ The discovery of Buddhist sculptures (belonging to the late period) from Hadda indicates that Buddhism continued to flourish here even after the disastrous invasion of the Hūṇas. The Buddhist monastery at Foundukistan can be dated to the 7th century CE. It is situated on a conical hill in the Ghorband Valley, 128 km, east of Bamiyan, to the south of the Charikar-Bamiyan road (in Afghanistan). The discovery of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts, stone inscriptions and inscribed bronze sculptures further proved the active patronage given to the Pañola Shāhī rulers of Gilgit.

In the third chapter the author gives us a synchronic view of specific routes in the Indian subcontinent. He referred to two important routes viz. the ‘Northern Route’ (*uttarāpatha*) and ‘Southern Route’ (*dakshināpatha*) through which Buddhist communities, travellers, merchants and traders travelled within and beyond South Asia. According to him these terms generally designate geographical/cultural regions of northern and southern India, often in relation to the location of the author of a text, the original homelands of travellers, or the domain of rulers whose exploits are eulogized in inscriptions. At the same time he has taken into account the arteries of commercial and cultural exchange, which were linked to much larger overland and maritime networks served as paths of Buddhist transmission. The importance of nodes like Mathurā and Taxila in northern and northwestern India and Bhārut, Vidiśā and Sāñchī etc. in Central India which joined the main overland and feeder roads to northern and southern India are important feature of this chapter.

Gandhāra was the ancient name of a region which included Pushakalāvatī (Charsada in the Peshawar district) and sometimes also Takshaśilā (Shāh-dherī = Taxila in the Rawalpindi district). The country was situated on both sides on the Sindhu or the Indus and included parts of the Peshawar and Rawalpindi districts. The term in its broader sense, comprised besides, Gandhōra proper, several neighboring regions, particularly the Swat and other river valleys to the north, the region around the city of Taxila to the east, and the Eastern Afghanistan (culturally it was a part of Indian Subcontinent). The focus of fourth chapter is on this region which is considered by the author as contact zone for movement into and out of South Asia. Migrations of Greeks, Śakas, Kushāṇas, Sassanids and Hūṇas enriched

### Book Review

the political and cultural history of this fertile region. It was one of the major centers of Buddhism since its introduction during the reign of Mauryan king Aśoka till the end of the 10th century CE. This is attested by epigraphic and literary sources. The author has recorded some remarkable discoveries in the last decade. These included several birch-bark manuscripts from Eastern Afghanistan, which are now in the Oriental and India office Collections of the British library, London, in the Washington University library and the palm-leaf fragment of Gandhārī texts from Schøyen Collection. The birch-bark Buddhist scrolls are written in the Gandhārī language and the Kharoshṭī script. These have added significantly to our knowledge of Buddhism in the region concerned. The inclusion of fourth collection of birch-bark scrolls from the Bajaur district of NWFP Pakistan in the present chapter confirm the fact that the Gandhāran Buddhists had in the early Christian centuries a substantial corpus of written scriptures in the Gandhārī language. Archaeological excavations conducted at different sites of Gandhāra led bear the ruins of large number of Buddhist monasteries and stūpas. These monasteries were located either on the travel route, on the hillside or just outside the urban area. However, there are some exceptions. Some of them are situated within the urban settlement. In this connection mention may be made to 'Kanishka Vihāra' at Shāh-jī-kī-Dherī in the city of Peshawar. These Buddhist monasteries were dependent on urban patronage or local agriculture. While those located on the river side like Hashtanagar on the hilltop namely Takht-i-Bāhī, Jamālgarhi, Sikrī etc. were benefited from their position within interregional networks used by traders, pilgrims, and other travellers. Several innovations which took place in the region concerned during the early Christian centuries in the field of Buddhist art is well explained by author with help of archaeological remains. Buddhism also flourished in the Swat valley (ancient Uddiyāna) and the Bajaur in north-western Pakistan and in Kashmir which had close link with the region of Gandhāra. It is from this region that Buddhism disseminated to Central Asia and China in the 1st century CE. Thus as the primary zone of contact and encounter between Indian Subcontinent on the one hand and outside world on the other, Gandhāra provided a springboard for the transmission of Buddhism beyond South Asia.

A large number of inscriptions and rock-carvings which have been discovered along the Upper Indus, the Ghirz (Gilgit) and the Hunza valleys in the remote corner of Pakistan are examined in detail in the fifth chapter. At the same time a network of capillary routes that directly connected branches of Northern Route with the 'Silk Routes' in the Tarim basin of eastern Central Asia are subject of discussion. Inscriptions are written in Indian scripts such as Kharoshṭī, Brāhmī and Proto-Saradā and many others have been found to be in Sogdian, Bactrian, Tibetan, Chinese and even in Hebrew characters. The petroglyphs at the above mentioned sites mainly depict Buddhist themes like Jātaka stories, different structural design associated with stūpas, hagiographical events in the life of Śākyamuni, and previous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the names of Buddhist visitors and local devotees. This

clearly indicates the popularity of Buddhism in the remote corner of the Northern Pakistan. Interestingly, Buddhist monasteries did not proliferate in this region due to inadequate surplus resources. The availability of Buddhist rock-carvings from the Upper Indus, Gilgit and Hunza valleys shows that travellers, merchants and itinerant monks on pathways through the deep river valleys and across passes through the western Himalayas, Hindu Kush and Karakorum mountain ranges acted as successful agents of long-distance transmission.

In the sixth chapter Dr Neelis has tried to investigate trans-regional exchanges between South Asia, Central Asia and China which provide the broad context for understanding the initial pattern of long-distance transmission of Buddhism through the transit zone of Xinjiang via numerous routes from multiple centres. He has given much emphasis on the material evidence for Buddhist establishments in Khotan, Miran, and other oases in the southern Tarim Basin during the 1st centuries CE. At the same time artistic traditions and literatures connected with centers on the northern and intermediate Silk routes near Kucha, Turfan and Dunhuang are also discussed. He believes that diverse Central Asian and Chinese Buddhist traditions did not arrive from either Bactria or Gandhara via a single main artery of the Silk Road, but resulted from more complex processes of transplantation, transmission and transformation.

In the concluding chapter (seventh) Dr. Neelis has given us a synoptic view of what he has said in earlier pages regarding the ‘Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks’ highlighting the importance of the model of ‘long-distance transmission’ to transit zones between South Asia and Central Asia rather than viewing the spread of Buddhism as a process of gradual diffusion from one point to another along major trade routes. Towards the end he has tried to give answer to a very pertinent question ‘how did the Buddhist Sangha make itself attractive to diverse audiences of patrons, devotees and monastic recruits in South Asia and Central Asia?’

This scholarly work certainly contains matters enlightening us on many important and knotty problems related to the early transmission of Buddhism within and beyond South Asia. The most important feature of the book seems to be the handling of sources with rigour and competence. I am sure that students of both religious and economic history will be much benefited from the work of Dr. Jason Neelis. The reviewer only feels that a chapter on the role of Buddhist sects in the dissemination of Buddhism from north-western borderlands of South Asia to Central Asia and China would have been a welcome addition.

*Sarita Khettry*

**Sculptures in Bangladesh—eds. Enamul Haque and Adalbert J. Gail**

The International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, Dhaka, 2008.

The book under review is a descriptive as well as analytical inventory of select Hindu, Buddhist and Jain stone and bronze images preserved in different museums, institutions and private collections. The compilation of the inventory goes to the credit of Enamul Haque, Adalbert J. Gail, Gouriswar Bhattacharva, Gerd J. R. Mevissen, Isabell Johne and Falk Reitz. Among them, Haque had to shoulder the responsibility of writing about half of the entries (263 out of a total of 639 entries).

The book begins with a Note narrating, among other things, how the project received its present shape after surmounting so many hurdles such as denial of access to the reserve collection of the two leading museums of Bangladesh.

The Preface that follows explains the nature and scope of the inventory.

The text has two parts. Iconographic Studies and Inventory of the Sculptures constitute Part-I and Part-II respectively. There is a little part which incorporates the list of the plates illustrating sculptures discussed. Two concordances, one according to Inventory Nos. and the other according to Plate Nos. have been added. The usual Bibliography and Index come one after another at the end.

Iconographic Studies deal with Hindu, Syncretic, Buddhist, Jain and Yakṣa images. Hindu images have been taken up according to their cult affiliation. In this section, a praiseworthy attempt is made to reconcile the apparent discrepancies in the different texts of the *caturvitṁśati* images of Viṣṇu of the *Pāñcarātra* system. It has been observed that among the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, the majority represent Varāha and Nṛsīmha. It would be preferable if the images of the latter were classified into two groups, one showing him in the act of tearing Hiranyakasipu and the other presenting him as Kevala-Narasīmha, instead of mixing them together.

The studies on various forms of Śiva are interesting and informative. The fact that Śiva dancing on a bull was the only form in which the *nṛtyamurtis* of the god were executed in Bengal has been reasserted here by pointing out that such images alone were discovered in Bangladesh. We are informed that an inscription on the pedestal of one such image refers to the god as *Narteśvara*. It may be mentioned in this connection that on some medallions, found in the western region of West Bengal, dancing Śiva is not mounted on a bull. It has been noticed that among other forms of Śiva, his *Ardhanārīśvara* aspect was rarely represented in sculptures, while Umā-Maheśvara images were discovered in large number. This imbalance is assumed to be due to the impression that in the Ardhanārī composition the female part occupying the inferior position being on the left was unacceptable in a country where Devī as Śakti was as mighty as Śiva. This hypothesis

goes against the fact that in Orissa, where Śaktism was no less powerful than Śaivism, Ardhanārī-Śiva were found aplenty. Among the very limited number of *Vaivāhika mūrtis*, our attention has been drawn to one which, while showing Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī, includes Gaṇeśa and Kārttika as present or, the occasion. Rightly taken as an anachronism, this composition hardly finds a parallel.

An elaborate treatment has been accorded to the images of Sūrya and his attendants: chariot, charioteers and even horses drawing the chariot. Images of Revanta and astral deities have also been covered.

In the section on Devī, an image type of the goddess flanked by Gaṇeśa and Kārttika has been identified, on the evidence of the *Agnipurāṇa*, with Lalitā though it was sometimes wrongly taken to represent Umā. Notice has been taken of textual reference to three placid forms of Devī, viz. Umā, Pārvatī and Gaurī, but the inventory could record examples of the last two only. A common motif in Bangladesh depicts a lying female figure with a child by her side. We are told that an inscription on the pedestal of one such composition describes the female divinity as Gauri. It would put at rest any doubt about her identity. Another interesting identification of a goddess under a snake-hooded canopy with Sarngai (alternatively Sarngika) on epigraphic evidence proves wrong the common belief that she is Manasā.

Deities like Prajāpati Brahman, Gaṇeśa, Skanda-Kārttikeya and Dikpālas are grouped under the little Miscellaneous Hindu Images. Discussions on them are detailed and informative. However, Gaṇeśa should have been included in an exhaustive section since the Gāṇapati cult was one of the five components of the *Pāñcarātra* system. Again the suggestion that most of the images of Brahman, taken note of by the Inventory, occupied the side niches of the temples does not consider that the ogee-pointed stele of these images disagree with their placing in such rectangular space as the side niches offer.

The study on the syncretic images takes into account the sculptural representations of Mārtanda Bhairava, Hari-Hara and Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara. The only example of Mārtanda Bhairava, now in the Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi, is said to have been collected from the Malda District. It is worth mentioning here that another image of the god is worshipped in a Late Medieval temple at Bindol in the North Dinajpur District of West Bengal. It is significant that both the images were found in north Bengal. The images of Hari-Hara, as has been asserted on the evidence of the *Harivarṇa*, expressed the underlying unity of Śiva and Viṣṇu. However, in the images of the composite god a hidden sectarianism determined the placement of the Viṣṇu part on the left of Śiva. Left being the inferior part, Śiva's superiority over Viṣṇu is explicit. In the same way, Viṣṇu's superiority over Śiva was emphasized by Hari occupying the right half of the icon on a terracotta plaque on the Śyāmarāya (1643 CE), a Vaiṣṇava temple in Bishnupur, West Bengal. A multi-handed figure with or without the snake-hooded canopy, carrying attributes of Viṣṇu and topped by a

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meditating figure, identified with Amitābha, has been designated as Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara, which in the opinion of the contributor is Buddhist figure representing Amitābha in the garb of Viṣṇu. A claim like this ignores the fact that a considerable number of similar images without the meditating figure at the crest were found in a region comprising the eastern extension of the Chotanagpur plateau in West Bengal where no trace of Buddhist presence was ever discovered. On the other hand, Jainism was very much active in this region. Under the circumstances, images of this enigmatic figure should not always be generalized as a Buddhist divinity. The following two chapters contain the Inventory of Buddhist and Jain images. Regarding Buddhist images, a distinction has been made between 'Historical Buddha Śākyamuni' and 'Transcendent Buddha'. The two examples of the former cited here, depict Buddha as the central figure with the depiction of Eight Great Miracles around. Illustrated examples of Transcendent Buddha are conspicuously absent. On the other hand, Bodhisatvas and male and female divinities affiliated with Buddhism, received elaborate treatment.

In a brief chapter on Jainism, six images have discussed for their iconographic peculiarities. One of them is the image of Pārśvanātha who has been shown as been attacked by arrow shooting Kāmaṭha. In the iconography of Kāmaṭha, as we are told, the evil spirit was nowhere else found shooting an arrow. It has been claimed that the idea of Kāmaṭha threatening Pārśvanātha was influenced by the Māradharṣaṇa theme of Buddhist iconography. However, it has been overlooked that this possibility was suggested as early as 1939 by B. C. Bhattacharya (*Jain Iconography*, Lahore) and again by Umakant P. Shah in 1987 (*Jaina Rūpamandana*, New Delhi),

The iconographic studies come to a close with a short note on an assumed Yakṣa figure. It is headless stone torso whose supposed identification is inspired by execution in the line of Parkham and Patna Yakṣas.

Part II of the book largely comprises a museum-wise inventory of the sculptures noticed in Part I. These sculptures are also illustrated collection-wise by 547 plates. It would have helped the reader had the arrangement been made thematically.

The Bibliography is exhaustive but the omission of B.C. Bhattacharya's *Jaina Iconography* and Umakant P. Shah's *Jaina Rūpamandana* is noticeable.

Notwithstanding our reservation in respect of certain observations, the book is a valuable addition to the literature on Bengal art and iconography. The band of dedicated scholars, whose painstaking research and analytical mind gave the book its present shape, reached the goal of their mission with great success.

D. R. Das

**Stone Sculpture in the Chittagong University Museum: A Descriptive Catalogue**  
—Shamsul Hossain

Bangladesh, Chittagong University Museum; 151 pages including 52 photographs in colour and 1 map; 2009; price not stated.

Long before the establishment of the Chittagong University Museum (hereinafter CUM) in 1973 the students, lay collectors, and donors presented many antiquities to the University found from different places of Bangladesh. This is the first University Museum in Bangladesh. It has been a centre of attraction for scholars from various parts of the world.

Shamsul Hossain, the first curator and founding academic staff of the CUM catalogued fifty two stone sculptures of the Museum into seven iconographic or cult categories. Among the seven types of intact and fragmented stone sculptures preserved in the museum two are of Buddhist inspiration, twenty of Vaiṣṇava, ten of Śaiva, four of Saura, ten of Śākta/ Devī, one of Gāṇapatiya, four of miscellaneous, and one of an unclassifiable type. Hossain mentions the iconographic traditions of Bengal repertoire very briefly with quotations taken from books written by specialists in the area. While mentioning the metal sculptures of Bengal he has referred to ‘Jhewari’ as ‘Jhiuri’. Debala Mitra in her *Bronzes from Bangladesh: A Study of Buddhist Images from District Chittagong* (1982) and Asok K. Bhattacharyya in his *Jhewari Bronze Buddhas* (1989) have both referred to the place as ‘Jhewari’. Now we know that ‘Jhiuri’ is the local name

According to the author Shamsul Hossain, the stone sculptures housed in CUM bear certain special iconographic features. Out of the fifty-two stone sculptures housed in CUM, forty six of them find mention in the works of Hossain, Rahman, Eaton and Haque.

The Museum possesses some rare types of Śākta images like Māheśvarī and Kokāmukha Durgā. The CUM also has two inscribed images of Viṣṇu (CUM 652, Plate No. 04 and CUM 767, Plate No. 17) bearing unique iconographic features. The appearance of goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on either side of the pedestal in a Garudārūḍha Viṣṇu image (CUM 783, Plate No. 20) of 11th century AD is quite significant. Probably this is the only known instance of two female consorts of Viṣṇu appearing on the pedestal of an image.

In this book the author has discussed the iconographic description of each sculpture in detail. To describe their iconographic features he has used many non-English and technical words. It would have been better if the author had provided a glossary to explain the meanings of such words. General readers are not acquainted with them. This book will enhance the knowledge of students and scholars. It will also serve as an important reference book for researchers and art historians.

The book will also be of immense interest to inquisitive visitors of CUM. The most noteworthy feature of the book is the 52 colour plates of the sculptures along with their

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detailed descriptions. Most museum catalogues do not bear photographs of all the antiquities in their collection. The quality of the photographs is quite good but the binding is not up to the mark. Except a few minor lapses like lack of mention of such important works on Brahmanical iconography as *Pratimāśilpe Hindu Devadevi* by Dr Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, the book is worth possessing.

*Sudipa Ray Bandyopadhyay*

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